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DIVORCED AND SEPARATED FAMILIES: SOME MOTHERS'

VIEWS OF CAUSE AND EFFECT.

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Education at Massey University.

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ABSTRACT.

Forty divorced or separated women receiving either a domestic purposes benefit or a deserted wives benefit participated in an interview to determine some of the important issues facing their families. The results of these interviews were not intended to represent a total view of divorced and separated families but rather a tentative understanding of them so that guidelines on community action might be formulated with more insight. The information gained was supplemented by the views expressed in the preliminary survey and the representations in the reviewed literature. This was then used in the formulation of ideas for further research.

The women defined four major causes of marriage failure all of which were attributable to their(ex) husbands' behaviour; excessive drinking, physical violence, financial irresponsibility and adultery.

The provisions of the June 1972 budget had improved incomes but saving for the replacement of the more expensive household items was difficult. However, the security of a regular income since separation meant a marked improvement for most of the women. The monetary advantage accruing to those who rented houses or units as opposed to those in privately rented houses or flats, was quite marked. The women currently employed showed an above-average morale and seemed generally satisfied with this aspect of their lives.

The strongest features of the examination of health were the 60% of mothers who noted an improvement in health since their separation, the fact that birth order was a much more

important independent variable than sex when considering the children's health, and the general conclusion that the health of both mothers and children is likely to be better under the conditions of single parenthood rather than in an 'unhappy' but 'unbroken' home.

The generally low level of educational achievement for both the mothers and fathers contrasted with the mothers' generally high expectations for their children's educational achievement. This was consistent with the mothers' expressed satisfaction with the schools' performance.

About half of the mothers tended towards an introverted social attitude whilst the other half felt the desire to expand their social contacts. There was a generally low level of neighbour-contact but this could be partly explained by the high mobility of this group—just under half had moved house within the previous two years. The wider kinship group emerged as the strongest ~~single~~ source of assistance for the families studied. There was no clear emergence of one single type of desired assistance and it was found that for the majority of the women their needs could be defined as non-material. For 45% of the group leisure activity outside the home was almost non-existent.

A little under a half of the mothers found the effect of fatherlessness to be harmful to their children, but a majority considered that the father's absence had benefited the children. Both could be indicative of the damaging effects of the more extreme kinds of pre-separation tension. This

This was further manifested by the kinds of emotional disturbance reported among the children and their difficulties over social contacts. As might be expected, the older children were regarded as being much less willing to accept a step-father than the younger ones. For a large majority of mothers, the area of mother-child relations posed no unusual problems.

Over half of the mothers could be described as being well-adjusted to their single parenthood or that their adjustment was improving but 30% continued to be adversely affected by the separation. Only a quarter of the sample considered that remarriage would be undesirable under any circumstance, and one in ten professed to a lingering affection for their (ex) husband. It was demonstrated that the offspring of unhappy marriages were in turn more likely to experience unhappy marriages than the population at large.

Responses to the 'Cantril' questions showed the various differences among sub-groups of the sample particularly differences between the older women. Perhaps the most important single feature to emerge from this part of the study was the fact that the burdens of single-parenthood tended to fall most heavily on the shoulders of the women separated for two years or less.

The findings of this study left one impression more strongly than any others, that whilst difficulties and hardships persisted among divorced and separated mothers, these were a preferable alternative to the deprivations and indignities that prevailed for most of them before their husbands left home.

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Finally, I especially thank my wife, Helen, for her untiring encouragement and support.

"The final justification for any accounting or explanatory concepts must be the extent to which they enable a person to understand the problems with which he is dealing in all their full-bodied, ongoing complexity without distorting them to fit some preconceived model he may have."

. . . Cantril (1965)

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INTRODUCTION.

This study sets out to examine some of the important characteristics of mothers and children in families affected by divorce or separation. The information presented will be from an examination of the mothers' attitudes. Neither the children nor the fathers were interviewed for this study.

There have been investigations in this field, mainly in North America and Great Britain. The relevant points from these investigations will be reviewed and considered against the results of the present survey. In the case of some of the areas of this survey, (more particularly in the examination of Community Relations as affecting these families) few comparative studies are to be found.

Much that is already known must have universal application. Equally there must be something unique about the conditions for such families in this country. The overall lack of knowledge suggests that this study must be essentially flexible and exploratory. It must be designed to enable the researcher to preserve an open mind as to the uniqueness of each family and of the individuals who comprise them. The final result may lack scientific precision but the knowledge gained should clarify our thinking about these families and point to any common trends and dispositions, strengths or weaknesses, that may exist.

It will be shown that these families are affected by a variety of factors; age, number and sex of the children; duration of marriage; age of the remaining parent at the time of separation; and social factors such as race, religious affiliation, and area.

of residence.

The single parenthood of the mother will be looked at as both a dependent and an independent variable. The examination of it as a dependent variable necessitates a look at the nature and consequences of the crisis-provoking event. For the purposes of this study the antecedents and effects of both separation and divorce will be treated as being similar. Although the two are not to be equated, it remains true that they have more in common than the other two categories of solo parents, the widows and the unmarried mothers. This is in spite of the fact that the issue of remarriage is different for divorced and separated people. But the main practical difference will be found to be only in the duration of the father's absence and this is a crucial factor in explaining the emotional adjustment of the remaining family members. However, it will be found that the difference is not great as the divorced women did not differ greatly in emotional adjustment from the women who had been separated for over six years.

The concept of single parenthood as an independent variable focuses attention on its effect on family process and functioning. These will be of particular concern in this study. As Sprey (1970) points out:

"The causal explanation of single parenthood should combine the study of the nature of the crisis-provoking event with that of the specific conditional characteristics of the families under consideration. It seems symptomatic of the compartmentalisation in social science that this approach has not been followed more frequently.... It is the conceptualisation of single parenthood as an ongoing process that provides a frame of reference within which family process and its subsequent transformation into a single - parent one can be logically integrated.....

".....This type of analysis does not negate the uniqueness of the feelings and emotions of individuals, it merely abstracts certain properties for the purpose of scientific explanations," (21 -23)

The method of approach to be adopted by this study will not be without the risk of certain biases. For instance the selection procedures necessary to obtain the sample:- all the women were receiving social welfare benefit and all were self-selecting for the interview. This was inevitable if any sample was to be obtained at all as it would not be possible to trace non-legally separated women through any other source than the one used. Secondly, the study is totally dependent on the honesty of the women interviewed for the veracity of the findings. There was no attempt to cross-check any of the statements made and there would have been little purpose served in doing so. This is, after all, a study of the attitudes of the mothers themselves.

The purpose of this survey becomes more urgent with the increasing proportion of people in the community who are affected by separation or divorce. With new information, public attitudes can begin to be based on more realistic assessments rather than the common mixture of hostility, sentiment and pity. With a better understanding of how the women and children of these families live, we should be able to formulate policies and action that will facilitate the exercise of the community's responsibility towards them.

II THE PRELIMINARY SURVEY.

In the absence of any definite information on what might constitute the major problems for divorced and separated women it was decided that there should be a preliminary survey. This was conducted among professionals and others in Palmerston North who, in the course of their work, would come in contact with divorced and separated women in such a way as to have an appreciation of the main issues facing these women individually or collectively.

Accordingly, the covering letter and questionnaire in Appendix A were sent out to seventy people in the city. (It will be noted that widows were not subsequently included in the main survey). The group included people working full-time in the employment of the Church, headmasters of all the schools, both primary and secondary, full-time and voluntary social workers employed by both private and government agencies, guidance counsellors, heads of relevant government departments, public figures who have concerned themselves with welfare issues, and two psychiatrists.

Replies were received from just under half the people contacted and their comments were taken into account in formulating the essentially exploratory interview guide for the main survey (Appendix D).

The main points in answer to the eight questions in Appendix A are summarised as follows:-

I Major problems of single-parent family in New Zealand identified:

1. Impairment of sexual identity. Absence of male model.
2. Financial insecurity.

3. Communication difficulties between children (mainly teenagers) and parent.
4. Hindrance of social activities.
5. Unwillingness of some to recognise or admit a problem.
6. Strain of working as well as carrying family burdens.
7. Tendency for single-parent families to be housed together.
8. Certain stigma of having no father, feeling that society is essentially unconcerned.
9. Sometimes unrealistic demand placed on eldest child in the family.
10. For mother overstrain, overwork, worry, health problems.
11. Mother more inclined to cling to children where father would permit more independence.
12. Possibility of a defective upbringing being passed onto the next generation.
13. Possible damage to self-concept, self-respect.
14. Emotional problems caused by loneliness, boredom.
15. Marriage still essentially 'unfinished business,' often continuing problems of access; maintenance ' and 'double ownership.' Guilt on part of mother or children, divided loyalties for children, possibility that they could be used as 'pawns' in parental conflict.
16. For some separated families the uncertainty about continued residence by the father.
17. For some mothers and children, unresolved feelings of failure and belief that they have caused the father's departure.
18. Marital crises and separations often protracted so

maximising the psychological problems encountered
by the children

II Some Problems Facing Single-Parent Families in New Zealand.

1. Preoccupation with affluence and materialism part of general defect in Western Culture.
2. Emotional conflict for mothers induced by dilemma of whether to be self-supporting or dependent on State benefits (She might think she would be a happier mother for working yet not able to devote sufficient time to the family in doing so)
3. The high earning capacity of minors could be in conflict with their long-term educational requirements.
4. Easier for a man in New Zealand (than in many other countries) to leave his family and disappear without trace.
5. 'Our great rugby cult fosters an image of the hard-drinking, hard-hitting Kiwi male. Some women hope to change this attitude after marriage and they fail'
6. Stronger laws needed to enforce maintenance payments. High work mobility makes attachment orders on wages difficult.
7. This high mobility can leave deserted wives stranded with family debts in areas remote from the help of relatives.
8. Some misleading news media emphasising the pursuit of harmful values which contribute to a naive and unrealistic approach to the marital relationship.

III Some effects of these problems.

1. Capacity for learning of some children adversely affected at school.

2. General challenge to the mother's authority resulting in her increased anxiety and sensitivity to her children's behaviour.
3. General withdrawal of single-parent from social participation.
4. Unattached females considered fair game for roving males.
5. Children grow up with false image of the absent parent.
6. Some children feel 'short-changed' when observing the interaction of normal families.
7. Possibility of intelligent children having to leave school early to support the rest of the family.

IV Some suggested appropriate remedies.

1. Extension of Birthright work to provide a father-figure who is prepared to share more extensively in the family's activity.
2. Exposure at school to teacher of opposite sex to parent.
3. Retraining and refresher courses for women who have not worked for some years - instruction for young mothers in home science.
4. Streamlining of procedures adopted by government departments.
5. Sliding scale for grants so as to allow for the increasing age of the child.
6. Social welfare benefit available to all solo mothers on the same terms as universal superannuation.
7. More and better publicity about the sources of assistance available.

8. Some method of payment devised to pay mothers for rearing their children (fulfilling service to society by providing future citizens)
9. 'Scattering' by SAC in the allocation of State Houses and Units.
10. Make marriage as difficult to achieve as divorce. Adequate preventive measures; compulsory pre-marital instruction on a wide variety of issues.
11. Better system for maintenance collection; deduction to operate similar to the PAYE system.
12. Adequate research on the needs of children from these families which might lead to action especially through the education system.
13. Immediate cash payments available for women when their husbands die or desert.
14. Moral support more important than material help.
15. A corps of elite social workers, highly trained to identify problems early and free for follow-up work where required.
16. More and cheaper child-care centres for working mothers.
17. Extra tax relief in lieu of housekeeper for working mothers.
18. Official recognition of mothers' needs to live and work in areas where they can get assistance in caring for children from relatives - e.g. a mother who is a school-teacher who may have to forego promotion and increased income because she is not in a position to move house.

Note: Some of the writers emphasised the capacity of many

women (and their children) to be resilient and adaptable in adverse situations. One person pointed out that it was better to have one stable parent than two unstable ones.

In an exploratory study of this kind, the literature reviewed, must, of necessity range over a variety of topics. To be relevant to this particular survey the literature must deal with areas of concern in the lives of women and children affected by divorce or separation. Naturally, some of these areas overlap with concerns shared by two-parent families, e.g. the problems associated with child development and more particularly those concerned with education, adolescence or delinquency. However the literature reviewed will be concerned only with these problems as they affect the sole mother. In addition it will deal with situations peculiar to the solo mother, the main one being the effects of fatherlessness on the children. Most of the available journal articles are concentrated on this this topic. Included under this heading will be considerations of aspects of mother-child relationships. The literature dealing with the problems faced by the mother herself will be considered separately. The material available on this particular topic is comparatively scarce.

(1) Finance.

The first consideration, however, will be the finances of the solo-mother family since the economic factor is fundamental in any consideration of the welfare of this group.

Marsden (1969) has made a comprehensive study of the solo mother in England, with an emphasis on the problems raised by poverty. He investigated the circumstances of

116 fatherless families by interviewing unmarried, separated, divorced and widowed mothers with children, who were dependent on national assistance. He stressed that the families studied were few and could not be representative (there are about 350,000 fatherless families in England) but their situation did hint at typical problems. He found widows to be the least poor among the families while those mothers with only illegitimate dependents had the smallest incomes. The divorced and separated therefore came between these two sub-groups but their incomes varied. The level of the National Assistance Board allowance was equivalent to only half the income of the average couple with two children in the general population, but it was only a little below the income an unsupported mother could earn by working. Marsden's conclusion was that there was undeniable evidence that incomes were inadequate and that as a consequence the families were deprived. He found that many mothers were going short of food and that although children of school age usually had school meals their diets were likely to suffer at weekends and during the school holidays. For adequate clothing the mothers relied largely on gifts from relations, with resulting deprivation if this generosity failed.

Half the separated and divorced women lived in poor housing which was privately rented from non-relatives. Half of all the families interviewed were over-crowded, one fifth had no furniture, and when compared with the national average they lacked household appliances.

Marsden thought the low standard of living was felt by the mothers particularly as it affected the children, and the

mothers sacrificed much in an effort to protect their children from the impact of deprivation. In fact he found that two thirds of the mothers said they felt poor some or all of the time despite the fact that they were reluctant to admit to shortages.

"To a limited extent feelings of deprivation tied in with level of income. However, the overriding influence upon how mothers felt-as with the distribution of incomes and the standard of the mothers' homes - appeared to derive from outside their immediate material situation " (p.233)

Deprivation therefore, could not be understood in purely material terms. It was part of the totality of their past lives, their attitude to the future and the quality of their social and emotional relationships. However, there is strong evidence from Marsden's research that material inadequacies among solo mothers in England contribute significantly to their total deprivation. The present study should help to clarify the situation in New Zealand.

The Royal Commission on Social Security in New Zealand (March 1972) found as follows:

"Surveys carried out in other countries reveal that solo-parent families, particularly fatherless families, face high risk of poverty. Those solo-parent families in or near poverty not only experience the deprivations of being poor but have other problems due to the lack of a partner, and being one parent short. While no large-scale surveys have been made in New Zealand, the evidence we heard suggests that low income among solo female parents is one of this country's major welfare problems." (p.242)

The Commission, having identified one of the country's major welfare problems, made recommendations set out below:-

TABLE 1

Weekly Income for Separated and Divorced Women 1972
(including Family Benefit but not including Supplementary Assistance granted at the discretion of the Social Security Commission.)

| | Pre-June 1972. | As Recommended by the Royal Commission. | Post-June 1972 (following Budget Changes) |
|--|----------------|---|---|
| For Solo parent with one dependent child. | \$31.60 | \$33.00 | \$35.00 |
| For Solo parent with two dependent children..... | \$34.60 | \$39.00 | \$41.00 |
| For Solo parent with three dependent children..... | \$37.60 | \$43.50 | \$45.25 |
| For Solo parent with four dependent children..... | \$40.60 | \$48.00 | \$49.50 |

It is apparent that the Government considered the Commission to have been too timid in making its recommendations for benefit increases. The rise of just over 20% accorded to the solo-parent with four children in the Budget clearly demonstrates that it considered the pre-budget income (prevailing at the time this survey was undertaken) to have been inadequate.

On the matter of means and income tests the Government again exceeded the limitations recommended by the Commission. Throughout Chapter 15 the Commission built up its case for reducing the maximum allowable income from \$676 per annum (or \$13 per week to \$520 per annum (or \$10 per week) Not until the thirty-first paragraph was the case of the solo parent specifically considered:

"The rate of abatement of benefit is such that there is no financial incentive for those beneficiaries such as solo parents with dependent children to do further work after they have reached some \$20 of other income or earnings. But the desire to work is by no means determined solely by the levels of allowable income set for benefit purposes." (p.146)

It is difficult to imagine any one, let alone a solo parent facing other unusual stresses, wishing to be employed for no financial gain.

In the June 1972 budget the Government adopted the Commission's recommendation that the maximum allowable income be lowered to \$520 (or \$10 per week). The result is that whilst benefits have been increased, the incentive for solo-parents to become independent of state assistance has been reduced. The importance of this will become clearer when looking at those women in the sample group who were employed at the time of the interview.

It is relevant to note that the Government departed from the Commission's recommendation that benefits be abated by \$1 for every \$1 in respect of income earned above \$25 a week. A vestige of incentive was retained in the budget by the benefit being abated \$3 for every \$4 earned in excess of £25 per week. It was ironical that the Government should have had to protect solo-parents from such a recommendation from the Commission when the Commission itself had stated that "low income among solo female parents is one of this country's major welfare problems."

(2) Some General Effect of Divorce and Separation on Children.

It is in looking at this particular aspect of the fatherless family that one finds the richest source of related literature. Under this heading it will be possible to examine the matter in a general sense, look at some of the emotional implications and consider the effects of fatherlessness on children of different ages. The literature on the relationship between fatherlessness and educational achievement as well as delinquency will also be considered.

Marsden (1969) found that children were commonly shielded by the immediate effects of the father's absence by their youth, lack of comprehension of the situation and the mother's efforts to help them adjust to the new situation. He found that half the mothers considered the fatherlessness to be harmful to their children. This was manifested in the mother's lack of control of the children with consequent problems in day to day living. He found in the families a trend towards over-protective and clinging behaviour which he thought must affect the child's independence in adult life.

Ostrovsky (1966), in a book devoted entirely to studying the effects on children without fathers, emphasises that whilst the processes of urbanisation and industrialisation have tended to decrease the importance of the father's role in the upbringing of the children, nevertheless his complete absence can induce real difficulties for the affected children. Perhaps the main difficulty is that caused by the distorted picture a child may develop of both the male and female roles

in society. This, Ostrovsky says, affects children in their social adjustment as the father's role forms an important basis for the later emotional attachments of both boys and girls and for their acceptance of both the male and female roles.

Neubauer (1960) provides ample evidence of the pathogenic potential which an absent parent may exert on sexual identification and superego formation. He found that the absent parent tended to become endowed with magical power either to gratify or to punish. The child tended to repress aggression against both parents. He also found that there are critical ages during which the oedipal conflict may be unduly intensified should either parent depart. This is illustrated by the work of Wylie and Delgado (1959) who report as follows:

"In summary, if we select cases on the basis of two criteria; namely, boys whose fathers are absent and whose mothers cannot control their aggressive behaviour, we find that the cases show many other features in common. Nearly all of the boys do poorly in school, half are enuretic and one fourth soil. The fathers are looked upon by the mothers as being bad; the boys are viewed as being like their fathers, and assume some of the father's role in the home. The relationship between mother and son is intense, highly sexualised and full of hostility. The mothers are closely tied to their own parents." (p.649.)

Ostrovsky (1966) also came to the conclusion that the father is important in providing emotional contact for his daughter, and in being an object of identification for his son so that the son may surmount the oedipal conflict and accept the male role symbolised by his father. The father balances the feminine influence of the mother so that their respective roles are complementary, giving an equilibrium to the family environment. The removal of one parent, therefore, upsets this

equilibrium with often far reaching effects for the children concerned.

Gardner (1956) develops further this aspect of the child's personal guilt about his parents' separation.

"In this situation it is very easy for the child to assume that if he had not been born the parents would be together-- that he was the cause of the separation. They wanted each other but did not want him. One can estimate the child's own sense of worth as an individual human being in the midst of such logical ruminations and such ruminations are the only logical ones the child can make in the light of the information that he is allowed to receive in many broken homes." (p.57)

In addition, for the mother, the child could become an economical, social and emotional burden - a reminder of past failures and deficiencies, with the mother tending to identify the child with all the bad and undesirable aspects of the father's makeup. This in turn could pose for the child the fear of being rejected a second time. This time by the mother. At the other extreme he could be smothered by the mother's love with consequential harmful effects. One such effect being that the mother's needs rather than those of the child become the motivating factors of the mother's behaviour.

Gardner also points out other side-effects for the child of a broken home. One in particular is the embarrassment caused by the probing of other children; explain the absence and whereabouts of the missing parent and declare a preference for either. In trying to answer these questions the child may feel considerable guilt when trying to express his true

feelings.

Lerner (1954) describes aspects of the child's guilt arising from the desertion of the father. He describes how pressure from the mother on the elder child to fill the father's role in the family can result in the child's fantasies of reuniting the parents. Lerner identifies some corollaries of the child's guilt and anxiety.

"The more guilty the child feels in his belief that he is the cause of the father's leaving, the more he will seek intimate bodily contact with the mother. A vicious circle can result, with the child tied permanently to the mother's needs, and the mother turning to the child—particularly the boy—to satisfy her longings for affection. The boy cannot fill his father's shoes. The mother may demand that the boy hate his father and join with her against him. The child may try to take his father's place, but his inevitable failure causes him to accumulate resentment towards the mother and secretly to idealise the father. His resentment towards the mother may prevent him later from turning to other women as objects of love." (p.7.)

In Lerner's view the loss of the father cannot be made good. There is no substitute or external help that can fully compensate.

Herzog and Sudia (1968) found that existing data about the effects on children of fatherlessness do not permit a decisive answer. They thought that there was not adequate evidence to indicate dramatic differences stemming from fatherlessness per se. They found on the evidence that many fatherless boys are not lacking a male model to the extent often assumed—especially boys in very low-income families. They raise the question as to whether an effective male model necessarily has to be one living at home. Children can learn

about the differing sex-roles through peer groups, mass media, siblings, and adults at home and school. They think influence of siblings in particular has tended to be underrated. Further, they assert, we are giving the wrong slant to the question when we ask, how much are children harmed by growing up in fatherless homes? Rather, we should be looking at the cluster of interacting factors that both mediate the effect of the variable of fatherlessness and also provide clues to methods of diminishing some adverse elements in its effects. In other words fatherlessness per se may not in itself be the crucial variable but rather the disposition, attitudes and general personality of the mother. They found that too often there is the tacit assumption that all two-parent homes are "good" homes, in which fathers are strong and zealous, all parental functions are shared, and close-knit harmony prevails. They point out that very few studies compare the effects on children of tense and conflict-ridden two-parent homes with the effects of harmonious, well organised one-parent homes.

Glasser and Navarre (1965) in looking at the structural problems facing one-parent families concluded that family structure may be seen as a variable intervening between the opportunity system and the socialisation process. They found that the absence of one parent affected the task, communication, power and affectional structures within the nuclear family. This in turn adversely affected the family's ability to fulfill its social and personal functions. The result of this was reflected in low socio-economic status and its perpetuation

through succeeding generations.

Both Goode(1956) and Plant (1944) investigated ways by which children were used consciously or unconsciously by parents both during the divorce conflict and afterwards. The result was inevitably damaging for the children. However, Goode also points out that research in this area has not been sufficiently precise. His view tends towards that of Herzog and Sudia (1968). He finds that the different types of variables e.g. parent-child relationships, need to be considered in assessing the damage caused by either the divorce or the marital conflict. He found that there is evidence that the separated home may lead to as many child problems as divorce itself. Mothers tended to worry about the effects of divorce on their children but almost all who remarried subsequently thought that their children's lives had improved. In considering the children's behaviour he found that if the divorce was traumatic for the wife, then the children were more likely to have at some time shown behavioural problems. The feelings of the children about their father also affected their behaviour; the ones who hardly knew their father were least affected, whilst those who always disliked him, or loved him less after the divorce, were most likely to have shown behavioural problems at some time.

The vital point emerging from Goode's research was that the mothers believed that their children had better lives as divorced children than they would have had as children of marital conflict.

Nye's (1956) findings support this conclusion. In comparing

children from homes broken by divorce with those living in intact but unhappy homes he found that children from broken homes showed less psychosomatic illness, less delinquency and better relationships with parents than children from intact but unhappy homes.

Sprey (1969) in looking at the effects of divorce on children points out:

"The small and intimate nature of our modern conjugal family.. The relationship between the parents and the children is, predictably, a deeply personal one. Children are assumed to love and respect both parents equally. There is no place to hide in the modern family. Under such conditions children, especially older ones, can be expected to participate intensely in the divorce process." (p.47)

The subsequent custody of the child, therefore, can be a matter of great anguish for all parties, with many people tending to underestimate the loyalty of children to both parents.

Sprey's conclusion is that all judgments about the effect of divorce on children depend essentially upon one's standards of comparison. As a total category he found that children in homes broken by divorce seem to do better than those that are unhappy but intact. However the sub-categories of 'children of divorce' may be so large and complex as to render the title meaningless for explanatory purposes.

Despert (1957) reiterates the finding that the emotional climate of the family before the father's death or absence greatly affects the child's reaction to such a separation. Her examination of a large number of cases led her to the conclusion that emotional divorce always preceded legal divorce

and that too often children's emotional disturbances are viewed in the light of the break alone and not in the light of the upsetting influences that preceded the final crisis. The father's desertion, she felt, could be interpreted by a child as his own responsibility, if prior to the desertion he felt that his father disapproved of him. What counted most, in Despert's view, was the emotional climate of the family, and the emotional maturity of the mother at the time of the separation.

Kliman (1968) points out that age differences in children's reactions to divorce are necessarily very marked. McDermott (1968) makes a detailed study of these reactions in children aged three to five. He found that for the majority of children at this age divorce has a significant impact and represents a major crisis. The initial period of shock is followed by acute depressive reactions. Boys, he found, showed a more dramatic change of behaviour which was characterised by the abrupt release of aggressive and destructive feelings. The disruption of identifications already in process affected boys more. Girls tended to identify with selected pathological features of the mother.

In looking at fatherless children (all fathers having been absent for at least two years) in the nine-to-eleven age group, Thomas (1968) found that the frequent assumption that boys would be more affected than girls was not supported by her study.

The problems of adolescents from broken homes have attracted some interest. Mohr (1947) believes that

preadolescent and early adolescent children tend to react sharply to the implications of divorce. As this is an unstable period in the emotional life of the child, he tends to be unsure of his identity. He is questioning his own competence and self-worth and is mistrustful of the attitudes of others towards him. Mohr's view is that any serious marital disharmony for the parents at this stage of the child's development would undoubtedly intensify these problems.

Burchinal (1968) investigated the effects of divorce upon school relationships and personality adjustment of adolescents. In his study he held the factor of socio-economic class constant. The main conclusion was that adolescents from divorced families appeared to be at no great disadvantage when compared with their classmates from intact homes. He does point out however, that some children will suffer extreme trauma because of divorce or separation with the result that their development will be adversely affected. He suggests that research should not focus on the negative influences of divorce rather it should study the processes whereby parents have minimised possible trauma for their children and helped them adapt to new family situations.

(3) Education.

There is evidence to suggest that the broken home does not in itself have a detrimental effect upon the child's achievement at school. Campbell (1932) reported that the achievement quotients of children in sixth and seventh grades, from broken homes, were unaffected when achievement

is regarded as accomplishment over a period of years. However she did find some correlation between the broken home and conduct disorders. She also found in a study of sixty - four boys that their school work was affected by the stress of a broken home but the position improved when the stress was removed. Neither conduct nor school achievement seemed to be affected when the child was from a home of long-standing parental separation.

Kelly, North and Zingle (1965) and Kreisberg (1967) note the extent to which social class factors contaminate the problem since they believe that the lower classes have a higher incidence of marital failure. In looking at sixth graders' reading achievement, Kelly, North and Zingle found that, when socio-economics status was controlled, family disruption per se did not have a uniform deleterious effect. However, family break-up during the first three years of school had a striking effect on reading achievement. Apparently this combination of misfortune exceeded the child's ability to adapt.

In looking at the aspirations of husbandless mothers for their children's education, Kreisberg (1967) noted that the evidence on whether children from fatherless families suffer an educational handicap was equivocal. This situation seems to have arisen because of the many variables involved had not been adequately controlled. He found that low income among husbandless mothers depressed the mothers' aspirations for actual years of involvement in school affairs. Given adequate support, then, husbandless mothers as a whole were adequately supportive of the children's educational achievement. But, naturally in the harsh

conditions associated with poverty, he found that the fatherless family is not as supportive of the child's educational achievement. It is of interest to note that Kreisberg found husbandless mothers, given favourable circumstances, to be more likely than married mothers to value education and to have high educational aspirations for their children.

(4) Delinquency.

As is the case with studies of education, the literature examining the relationship between separation/divorce and delinquency has had to be mindful of controlling the independent variable of poverty. As Hunt (1968) has said:

".....divorce and delinquency are both more common among poorer people, and occur side-by-side, perhaps not so much as cause-and effect as two effects of the same general cause" (p.286)

The other consideration of importance is whether or not children would be more likely to become delinquent if their incompatible parents did not separate. Both Despert (1958) and Nye (1956) believe that separation may, in many cases, be the most advantageous outcome for the child. Despert refers to a study by Elmer of 18,000 delinquent children; only one tenth of delinquent boys and about one fifth of delinquent girls came from families broken by actual separation and divorce. Nye compared a large group of adolescents from broken homes with another large group from unhappy unbroken homes. He found that the former were less often delinquent, were better adjusted to their parents and had distinctly fewer psychosomatic ailments. It would appear

then that there is quite strong evidence to suggest that the emotional conflicts which result in marital failure may contribute more to the child's delinquency than the actual divorce or separation of the parents. Kelly, North and Zingle (1965) note that the relation of family disruption to deviant behaviour may be a function of

- (a) lack of identification models.
- (b) perceived parental rejection.
- (c) 'unstable homes'
- (d) 'emotional' loss of support

It may well be that the more subtle emotional relationships within the family are responsible for child delinquency rather than any overt delinquencies of the parents (Silverman, 1935) What should also be noted is that family disruption during early childhood produces a higher incidence of deviant behaviour. (Glueck and Glueck, 1952; Monahan, 1960)

The study by Glueck and Glueck (1950) is generally regarded as the first serious attempt to match variables in order to determine the correlation of broken homes with delinquency. A comparison of 500 persistently delinquent boys was made with 500 non-delinquents. Each pair was matched for age, ethnic derivation, general intelligence and residence in economically underprivileged areas. They did in fact find that separation, widowhood and divorce were more likely to characterise the families of delinquents than those of non-delinquents. Sprey (1969) in reviewing this study pointed out that one would hardly expect family dissolution to be associated with an

improvement in conduct, especially when comparing broken and intact families as total categories. He points out that studies which compare different categories of divorced families or between divorced families and intact but unhappy ones would be more helpful in understanding the relationship between parental separation and delinquency.

Both Wootton (1959) and Wynn (1964) have examined the situation as it applies in the United Kingdom. Wootton concluded that the evidence connecting delinquency with broken homes ~~was~~ extremely imprecise, based on a great variety of definitions of the 'broken home' and on offenders of many (and often unstated) ages. Wynn found that juvenile delinquency in the United Kingdom is more closely correlated with poverty than with anything else. She noted that whilst one might expect a boy who lacks the guidance of a father to be a greater delinquent risk, ~~nevertheless~~ a very inadequate father at home may be worse than none at all.

Toby (1957) found that girls and pre-adolescents (of both sexes) from broken homes are more predisposed to be influenced towards delinquent behaviour than girls and

pre-adolescents from intact homes. On the other hand there was no appreciable relationship between broken homes and delinquency among adolescent males. His explanation for this was that the well integrated family usually gives firmer supervision for girls and pre-adolescents than adolescent males. If the family should cease to be well integrated, as in the case of parents separating, then this comparatively firmer supervision for girls and pre-adolescents relaxed and the protective shield is dropped. This results in the more positive relationship between broken homes and delinquency for girls and pre-adolescents than is the case for adolescent boys.

Klinan (1968) reporting a study by Gregory (1965) found that among girls the highest rates of delinquency occurred in separated or divorced families particularly in families where the girls live with fathers only. In the case of boys however, rates of delinquency were quite near to average if they were living with their father only but were the highest if they were living with their mother only because of separation or divorce. This was found to corroborate the Gluecks' finding that paternal absence is more critical than maternal absence in the development of juvenile delinquency in boys.

(5) Some Effects of Divorce and Separation on Mothers.

The literature to be reviewed under this heading will include some consideration of remarriage and problems associated with mothers' health and employment. The available literature on these topics is comparatively small when compared with that

dealing with the effects of fatherlessness on children.

Goode (1956) has pointed out that our existing kinship institutions do not make provision for the consequences of divorce within their structure. By virtue of the fact that there are no provisions which would allow the divorcee to play easily the mother role outside marriage, the institutional patterns therefore create pressures toward new marriages.

Remarriage is possible of course only for those mothers who are divorced. Sprey (1969) points out that divorced people are more likely to remarry than either single or widowed individuals of the same age. But for the women in Marsden's sample, only a small proportion saw remarriage as a solution to their problems. In fact a quarter of the mothers had a man friend, but half said they never met any men. He points out that a mother's chance of remarriage drops sharply after the age of thirty. In addition, the women, in general, were wary of remarriage both for the reasons of children's usual hostility to a new relationship and, in some cases, the actual financial deterrent of forfeiting income from national assistance. Many women were wary of losing their control over finances and their general sense of independence. Marsden found that the women preferred to postpone marriage, enter a more easily broken common-law marriage, or take a carefully chosen male lodger.

In examining the women in his study who had remarried, Goode (1956) found that three quarters thought their children's lives were better at the time of the interview than during

the previous marriage, and an additional 15% thought that their lives were about the same. Only 8 % thought that their children's lives had become worse. From this evidence, then, it would appear that whilst women in general have reservations about the effects of remarriage for themselves, there is a large majority who believe that it would be a beneficial step for their children. But on the evidence of both Rosenberg (1968) and Sprey (1969) it appears that children suffer to some extent whatever their age, if their mother intends to remarry fairly soon after her divorce.

The health of the solo mother was also examined by Marsden, Among his sample he found, at the time of the interview, that over a quarter had suffered 'nervous breakdowns' and at least one in nine had made suicide attempts. Half the mothers still suffered from bouts of depression, a quarter complained of tiredness and a tenth were still on pills, usually tranquilisers. He also found that almost half the mothers, many of whom had completely lost touch with their husband still had a sense of longing for him.

The problems facing working mothers in Britain are examined in detail by Yodkin and Holme (1963). They found that in the case of fatherless families the system of payments and allowances was full of anomalies and hardships. Further, they noted the 'hypocrisy' of society's attitude in that general opinion was, on the whole, opposed to mothers of dependent children going out to work yet solo mothers were usually praised for doing so. The definition of 'working mothers' of course requires care; as the authors point out, a part-time

job for a solo mother supporting a twelve year old is very different from the full-time employment of a solo mother supporting three children under the age of ten.

IVTHE SAMPLE.(1) Method of Establishment.

The sample for this study was obtained with the co-operation of the Social Welfare Department with whom negotiations began in July 1971. It was decided that the procedure should be as follows:

a letter (Appendix B) from the Chairman of the Social Security Commission (drafted in collaboration with the writer) went out to all women in Palmerston North and district receiving either a domestic purposes benefit or a deserted wife's benefit inviting them to participate in the survey. At the time the letter went out there were approximately one hundred and forty-five women in this category. Accompanying the letter was a form to be completed by those beneficiaries who wished to participate in the survey (Appendix C) and a stamped envelope addressed to the writer. Through these means the Department preserved complete confidentiality by not divulging the names of beneficiaries to an unauthorised person and a group of people were identified as wishing to participate in the survey (once they had completed and returned the form)

The letters and forms were despatched to the women in early March 1972 and forty-seven responses were received. Of these, forty were selected for interview. The seven not included were women who did not fall within the separated/divorced category. Interviewing began in mid-March 1972 and was completed by mid-June 1972.

(2) General Characteristics.

The forty respondents proved to be a heterogeneous group. Their ages ranged from nineteen to fifty-one years, the mean being thirty four years. Twenty seven were separated (including legally separated) and thirteen were divorced. The number of children per family ranged from one (in five cases) to ten (in one case). The forty mothers were supporting a total of one hundred and eight children, a further twenty-six having grown up and left home. One third of the children were aged twelve years or more and a further third were aged five years or less. The mean age of all children living at home was almost nine years.

Of the forty respondents, thirty seven lived in Palmerston North. By dividing the city roughly into four, one found twelve in the Takaro quarter, eleven in the West End quarter, nine in the Terrace End - Roslyn quarter and five in the Hokowhitu quarter. Of the remaining three, two were from Feilding and one from a rural area.

The time of separation from their husbands ranged from two months to seventeen and a half years. Thirty-five per cent had been separated for over six years and 30% had been separated for under two years. The mean duration of separation for all women was just over five years whilst the mean duration of marriage prior to separation was seven and a half years. The range of marriage duration was from one month to eighteen years. Almost half (nineteen) had been married for six years or more before separation.

(3) Comment

A sample of forty people would be too small to be considered representative of any group of divorced or separated women, whatever selection procedures were used. It would have been impractical for one person to have attempted to interview more people in the hope of obtaining a greater element of representation.

However, by its very selection procedure, this sample has characteristics which should be noted. Firstly, the group was self-selecting. The kinds of bias this introduced are difficult to assess. Judging from the heterogeneity of the group who did respond it would be difficult to say with precision whether or not there were common factors determining whether the women would or would not respond to the invitation to participate in the survey.

Marsden (1969) was to find that widows, then divorcees, had the highest response rates. Next came separated wives, followed by unmarried mothers. This sample then, is probably dealing with the 'middle order' responders. The response rate was somewhat lower than Marsden's, 32.5% as against 39% (to his first letter). He found that of the women who did not participate, the largest group consisted of mothers who had had the least happy relationships with N.A.B. officials or officials of other organisations. Other reasons he found included fear of "snooping" and interference rather than help. Other women had been just too disorganised to reply, some resented an intrusion into their privacy and others may have

been too apathetic or disinterested to bother.

Of those who did reply, Marsden found that about a third interviewed said they wanted to help others in their situation. The next largest group consisted of mothers who replied automatically to an official-looking document or they replied to show that they had nothing to hide. Some replied because they were desperate for help.

The second characteristic that should be noted of this sample is that all the women concerned were receiving a state benefit. There may be a relatively large, and almost unidentifiable group of women who are divorced or separated, supporting children, and totally dependent on a private maintenance agreement with their husband for support. This study does not purport to give information on that category of divorced or separated women who are not supporting children or who are supporting children entirely on their own income or from some source other than the state.

The extent to which this sample group is a useful representation of divorced or separated women supporting children must be assessed in terms of how it can give an indication of the true situation. Marsden pointed out that this group of one hundred and sixteen in England could only hint at what the true situation was, and the kinds of problems this category of people faced. Equally this would apply to the present study. Neither the Social Welfare Department nor the Statistics Department were able to provide national statistics on women receiving deserted wives benefits

or domestic purposes benefits which would assist in making an assessment of how representative this group of Palmerston North women were of the national group. It can only be assumed that such a group would not deviate very much from the New Zealand norm. What is apparent is the fact that the sample obtained reflects the heterogeneity expected of a group of this kind. It should not be unreasonable to assume, then, that the information obtained from this sample can be used as a guide for formulating a better understanding of all fatherless families affected by separation or divorce. An element of bias must be inevitable in a situation where one is completely dependent on the co-operation of others for the gathering of information. There would have been little purpose served in attempting to interview unwilling parties, had it been possible to identify them through some other source.

AN INVESTIGATION OF THE CAUSES OF MARRIAGE FAILURE.

Causes identified by the women for marriage failure were attributed to a variety of factors. However four factors did emerge as the most prominent and all were attributable to the husband's behaviour. These were: excessive drinking, marital infidelity, failure to provide sufficient finance and violence or cruelty to the wife or children.

A total of 70% of the women mentioned their husband's drinking as a contributory cause of the marriage breakdown. In nineteen of these cases the husband's excessive drinking dominated all other considerations and could only be described as ruinous to the marriage in the eyes of the women. In all but three of these cases, the heavy drinking resulted in violence and cruelty towards the mother and children. In the remaining nine cases it was sufficiently excessive to cause hardship to the other members of the family. Failure to provide adequately for the family was mentioned by 52.5% and cruelty to wife and/or children was mentioned by exactly half of the mothers. Marital infidelity on the part of the husband was mentioned by 55% of the mothers.

There then followed a variety of other causes mentioned by ~~the women~~ which will be described in order of frequency. In all cases where there were marriages of mixed racial origin (22.5%) the mothers named this factor as a contributory cause of marital failure although some gave it stronger emphasis than others.

Another 22.5% said their husbands were unable to persevere

in any one kind of employment for very long. This work instability usually meant that earnings fluctuated and there were frequent moves for the family. These moves naturally upset the continuity of education for the children but, more noticeably, the women found them a constant source of strain and anxiety as they were often ~~pregnant~~ at the time of moving. This added to their general insecurity.

Trouble with the law was mentioned by 20% but in only one case had the husband continued with a protracted period of imprisonment and ^{the} wife had stood by him only to become divorced at a later date. On the other hand in only one case had the husband's imprisonment been the sole cause of marital failure. In this case the marriage had lasted only two months.

Next, in six cases each (15%) came 'lack of communication' 'married too young', and 'ideals were different.' This last-mentioned category covered the kinds of situations where the mother felt her family's social status was superior to her (ex) husband's (the reverse was not mentioned) or where she felt her intelligence and/or education was superior to her (ex) husband's. Hence an inability to share common intellectual interests. The 'lack of communication' category tended to be a manifestation of the latter stages of marital failure. In five out of the six cases of 'married too young' the mother mentioned ~~that~~ she was pregnant at the time of her marriage. In two cases the mothers were pregnant to another man. They did not see this as contributing to the subsequent failure of the marriage.

Five mothers (12.5%) mentioned 'didn't do things together' and 'husband immature', whilst four (10%) blamed their husbands failure to assist with the household duties and having too many children too quickly. Five causes had the vote of three mothers (7.5%) They were: 'husband spoilt by parents', 'husband would not allow me to have other friends', 'social incompatibility' 'employment took him away from home too much' and 'mother-in-law trouble'. Two women each (5%) mention the following causes: 'husband's business worries', 'husband could not tolerate the children', 'husband had no interest in the children', 'husband's excessive gambling', 'husband selfish', 'dishonest' 'unreliable', 'irresponsible' and 'husband played in a band.' One woman mentioned 'different interests' and one mentioned 'husband too old' as contributing causes.

Bearing in mind that the causes mentioned above were volunteered by the mother on the spur of the moment in response to a question, one might reasonably assume that there were other unmentioned causes that were either overlooked or were too deeply personal to be volunteered. It is significant to note that at the early stage of the interview (when this question was asked) not one mother gave as a reason for the marriage failure a fault of her own (apart from marrying too young and the obvious wrong choice of partner.) Almost at the end of the interview a second related question was asked as follows:-
'do you think there were faults on both sides that led to the

break-up of the marriage? Here the response showed readiness to admit failure by some of the mothers. One might speculate that the response to a question bore a strong relationship to its framing or that by the conclusion of the interview the mothers were much less defensive and more inclined to be frank with the interviewer having already told him in detail her family situation. The fact remains that 65% subsequently admitted to a variety of faults. Some were the faults that one might expect anyone to admit to if placed in a similar situation. These were some typical examples: 'by not being submissive I may have invited trouble', 'I should have stuck up for my rights - I was inclined to give in to him for the sake of peace', 'perhaps I put the children first by not accompanying him to the pub in the evenings'. Some of the mothers felt that in retrospect they may have been inclined to put the children first but they felt that the alternative would have been disastrous because of the husband's irresponsibility. One mother felt that she may have been too dull for her husband. Another felt that they lost interest in each other and just grew apart. One felt that perhaps she had been too sensitive and easily upset by events. Lack of parental teaching about sex and general ignorance about marriage was mentioned by another. One said it was all her fault because she had brains enough to know not to marry him but did it in defiance of her father. Another said she had been homesick for her mother in the early stages and this had not helped matters.

Five mothers admitted to what might amount to a major

share of the blame. One thought she was hard to get on with, another said she tended to 'mother' him because she had brought up a large family of siblings. Another who had brought up her own siblings said she was nagging, bossy and possessive. A fourth said perhaps she talked too much whilst the fifth said she simply did not love her husband at the time of marriage.

At the other extreme seven mothers felt they were so completely the wronged party that nothing they did or did not do could have saved the situation. Two of them married heavy drinkers but hoped they could change their husband's habits. Both husbands subsequently became alcoholics.

Note: In this section the word "causes" is used in the sense that they were causes of marriage failure in the view of the women concerned.

VI SOME EFFECTS OF MARRIAGE FAILURE.1. General.(i) Finance.

The sample consisted of women supporting an average of 2.7 children each on an average income from all sources of \$39.20 per week. Following the 1972 Budget this income would have risen to approximately \$48 per week. Fifteen mothers were receiving supplementary assistance at an average of \$5.24 per week each and four were receiving direct payments of maintenance from their husbands at an average of \$21.50 per week. Their social welfare benefits were reduced accordingly.

The hardest hit group financially were those six women renting a private house or flat. Their average rental was \$13.42 per week compared with the twenty-six women in state houses or units and paid an average rental of \$5.48 per week. Further, the average income for the private house or flat tenants was \$38.19 per week as against \$40.72 per week for the state house tenants. This meant that they paid 34% of their income on rent as against 15% for state house tenants. All six women were anxious to obtain a state house as soon as possible although three of them expressed reservations about having to live in an undesirable area if they should get a state house.

Of the remaining eight women, three lived with their parents, three lived in their own house, one lived in a house owned by her husband and one had live-in employment. Those living in their own homes estimated their housing costs at an

average of \$9.75 per week.

Weekly incomes from all sources ranged from \$18.60 (mother and one child living with mother's parents) to \$48.50 (a working mother supporting five children and living in a state unit.) Cases of gross financial hardship were not encountered. The woman in the most precarious position, financially, was one who was living in a rented house costing \$15.00 per week caring for four children under seven. She was receiving a Domestic Purposes Benefit of \$6.60 per week, the rest of her income being derived from a maintenance order against her husband for \$28.00 per week. No arrangement had been made to have the money paid through the Social Welfare Department (as is the common practice.) The result was that she was heavily dependent on her husband's maintenance but payments were irregular and she had no way of predicting her income from week to week. The most financially secure group were those women who had been relatively thrifty and good managers and who had acquired a rented home that was reasonably comfortable. They were now in employment having teenage children who also contributed to the family income. Their employment was inevitably part-time in order to keep within the limits of the maximum allowable income.

In response to the question as to how their financial position had altered since the departure of their (ex) husband, 80% said that their financial position had improved since they had become social welfare beneficiaries. The most significant improvement for them was the regularity and predictability of the income, enabling them to budget accordingly. This fact alone suggests that money was at the heart of the conflict in many of these marriages and was often being deliberately withheld or wasted by the husband.

A survey of the (ex) husband's occupational classifications revealed that 25 (62.5%) were in unskilled or semi-skilled occupations. Nine (22.5%) were skilled tradesmen and five (12.5%) were in the salesman/clerical category. Apart from an army officer there were no (ex) husbands employed in the skilled

white collar/Professional category. Of the women who commented about their husbands' responsibility for continuing maintenance payments to the Social Welfare Department, almost all were critical that they seemed to be able to dodge their responsibilities if they simply kept one step ahead of the Department by frequent moves and changes of employment. The women asserted that the Department was prepared to write-off arrears of maintenance owing once they reached a specified amount. This procedure was regarded with bitterness by wives who knew that their husbands continued to spend freely on themselves or their friends whilst their families were deprived of this income.

In spite of the high percentage of women who claimed financial improvement since the (ex) husband's departure, 40% claimed that they still had to forego certain necessities in life. The item consistently emphasised as being difficult to maintain at a reasonable standard for all members of the family was clothing. Of the whole sample, 40% specifically mentioned clothing as posing a special problem. The cost of new clothing was often prohibitive and clothes were usually handed around the children until they were worn out. It seemed that food was given the highest priority in the family budget. Two mentioned the need to avoid buying fruit and another five said they always bought the cheapest meat, one woman restricting it to three meals per week. Five women spoke of the need to avoid any form of paid entertainment outside the home. Of the total sample, 75% spoke of the need to budget very carefully, cut corners and always look for

the best possible value. Of the remaining ten women five felt that they lived as well as anybody else and the remaining five had help from their family or found that their employment eliminated the need to be cautious with money.

On the matter of saving, 85% said that no saving was possible and the remainder could only save a small amount. This made the purchase of more expensive household items a particular hurdle and invariably the women relied on the hire-purchase method of buying.

Generally speaking the replacement of worn household furniture, carpets and bedding posed the greatest problem after clothing. When asked if they had any unusual items of expenditure (excluding such things as school fees or hire-purchase commitments) twenty eight said they did not, but six had to find extra money for medical specialist and dental specialist fees, whilst a further five were paying off old debts. One woman gave 10% of her income to the church.

(ii) Employment.

A total of twelve women (or 30%) were employed for monetary gain; eleven outside the home and one at home with boarders. Eight of the eleven felt that they were fairly paid for the work they did. One of the other three felt that she was being exploited at the pay rate of 75 cents an hour. It was an eight to three majority in favour of working if one had the choice of working or not. Two of the three who would prefer not to work also felt they were being unfairly paid.

When asked if they thought working affected their health, six of the eleven were either unaffected or felt it was beneficial. Of the remaining five, two felt it caused a mental rather than physical strain. (For one of them the factory employment was rep~~e~~titious and repugnant and she thought the female overseer went of of her way to make life unpleasant for everyone.) The remaining three kept poor health as a result of earlier experiences, so working imposed an additional strain.

Three women felt that working affected their capacity to look after the children. The remainder thought it made no difference except one who thought working made her a better mother.

There was no doubt that the maximum allowable income (which has been further reduced in the budget) was a deterrent for a number of mothers with school-age children who were willing to work but felt they should stay at home rather than see their benefits reduced. It became apparent that for some of the eleven non-working women with school-age children or older, the inclination to move outside the home, meet new people and perhaps develop new interests in the process, would have been of benefit to them. Their sense of loneliness and isolation would have been reduced. However the kind of part-time employment they would need was not readily available. For half of them, the feeling that the social welfare benefit was theirs by right, was a deterrent against any movement towards self-sufficiency.

(iii) Health.

There can be no doubt that the experiences relating to an unhappy marriage and the subsequent break-up adversely affected the health of the majority of the sample group. This was demonstrated by the general improvement in health since separation reported by 60% of the women. For a third of these however, their health was still not normal. For some the damage has been hard to repair. Seven who had felt an improvement since separation were still taking drugs or tranquilisers for nervous disorder or depression. But overall, of the ones who had improved since separation, there was a two to one majority of those who had returned to full health.

It is open to speculation as to just how these otherwise healthy people might have fared had their marriages continued much longer. Three reported suicide attempts and subsequent psychiatric treatment as a direct result of marital disharmony. A total of seventeen were affected by nervous disorder and depression to the extent that they required medical treatment.

Nine mothers (22.5%) said that their health was unchanged by their marital disharmony and subsequent separation. The remaining seven of the sample (17.5%) were those who continued to be in bad health and were not likely to show any sign of improvement because of their particular condition. At least two considered that they would not live much longer. In both cases their main concern was not for themselves but for their children. Five of the group of seven felt that their health had deteriorated since separation, largely as a result of the increasing strain and responsibility attached to being a solo parent.

In considering the health of the children involved one found that in 47.5% of the families with two or more children

the eldest child's health was more affected by the parental split than any of the other children. (The average number of children per family being 3.7) This would be understandable in cases where only the eldest child was old enough to remember his father. However, as the mean marriage duration for the whole sample prior to separation was seven and a half years one is forced to look elsewhere for possible causes. This study can offer no conclusive proof of the main cause or causes of this situation but it does seem possible that the mother transmits more of her anxiety and stress to the eldest child than to any other. The type of condition most often described by the mothers was that the eldest was tense and nervy. This possibly was a reflection of their own condition. The second-born seemed placid by comparison. This was the case whether the eldest was a boy or a girl. There was no evidence to suggest that a boy's health was any more likely to be adversely affected by the absence of the father than a girl's and vice versa.

For the whole group, the general standard of health among the children was reported to be good. Again it was the eldest child who was most often mentioned as having a complaint, the most common being nervous disorder followed by enuresis, asthma and bronchial trouble in that order. However 60% of the mothers said that their children had no unusual health problems. The most serious nervous disorder reported was of a seven year old girl, the eldest of three children, whose mother had been separated from her husband for only three months. She was enuretic both at home and at school and in addition was soiling

at school. Her mother said she was not responding to medical treatment.

On investigating any changes there may have been in the children's health patterns since their father left home it was found that 35% had settled down better or were otherwise improved as against 27.5% who showed no change before or after separation. In seven families health problems persisted since their parents separated and in these cases it was the eldest child who continued to be affected most. In four families the mother thought the children were too young at the time of the separation to be affected one way or the other.

Generally the mothers considered that the existing medical services were adequate. Two spoke of the doctors' refusals to make house calls and one spoke of the difficulty of finding an available practitioner on arriving in Palmerston North. One particular practitioner was cited by two women as having behaved in a completely neglectful and cruel way towards their children. In another instance, as a cure for nervous depression, one practitioner reportedly advised his patient to stop wasting her time sitting in a church (she attended once a week) and get out to a pub at night to meet people. (She has at present three children under five as the result of a now dissolved de facto union having lost the custody of seven children from a marriage that brought her close to suicide). For 75% of the women there were no problems at all regarding their general practitioner. For the remainder, apart from the problems already mentioned, the difficulties were

minor. One spoke of denying the family medical attention through lack of finance but this was not a permanent situation.

2. SOCIAL

(i) Education.

The level of formal education attained by the majority of mothers was not high. Twenty seven (67.5%) had not passed the fourth form at secondary school. Seven (17.5%) had passed school certificate. One mother was currently pursuing university study. When asked about the level of formal education attained by their (ex) husbands, seventeen said that they did not know accurately. Of these seventeen, three knew that he had at least attended secondary school. Eleven knew that their husbands had not attended a secondary school. Six had attended secondary school for a maximum of two years. Three were known to have attended for a fifth form year and a further two husbands were said to have acquired University Entrance. So of a total of 80 people (including husbands and wives) only 12 were known to have attended beyond the fourth form level.

This generally low level of education may be contrasted with the quite high aspirations the mothers had for their children's education. A high majority (90%) considered that their children should have as much education as possible. Some said they wanted their children to make up for the deficiencies in their own education. Others (10%) felt that special emphasis needed to be placed on the boy's education, mainly because it was felt that a boy's career was more important than a girl's.

Eleven said they would like their children to go to university if possible. Of the twenty-six children who had so far grown up and left home only one had gone on to university.

When asked if they felt that they and the schools were working in the same direction as they were in training their children, 57.5% were quite satisfied with the school's performance. The degree of satisfaction ranged from a very high opinion of the school's performance to comments such as 'no complaints.' Five specifically commented that once the teachers knew of the home situation, then they were much more helpful and understanding.

For those who were not satisfied with their children's schooling (27.5%), comments varied. Two mothers felt that the secondary schools were too big and impersonal, another was very critical of streaming in the secondary schools. One complained that the teachers humiliated her children while another said that the teachers had given her children the impression that they should not be staying at school beyond the age of fifteen thereby imposing a burden on their mother. Two said they believed in stripping whereas the school did not and as a result they felt their children lacked discipline at school. Another said she was not happy about the school but excused it because of its particular problems. Five mothers were unable to comment as their eldest child had not yet started school. All but three mothers felt that their children's attitude to school was satisfactory (the five just mentioned were not in a position to comment.) Among the remaining three ~~there~~ was a variation of attitude within the

the family, half liking school, the other half not.

The replies to this question may help to put some of the mothers' criticisms into perspective. Whilst they detected weaknesses in the system their children still found school to be acceptable. Only one child now attending school could be said to be truanting although four elder ones, now left school, were irregular attenders as well as being described as problem children at school.

Opinion was evenly divided as to the effect the absence of a father was considered to have had on the children's schooling. Thirteen (32.5%) thought his absence definitely helped their children's education although their reasons for saying this differed. Some thought the father would have made the children leave if he had continued at home, others felt his mere presence would have been an unsettling influence. Eleven mothers (27.5%) felt that the father's absence had no adverse effect on their children's schooling whilst nine (22.5%) thought the father's absence had an adverse effect on schooling. The main reason given was the absence of a male figure for discipline purposes, especially for boys. Other reasons included 'a man would be able to keep them at school longer' or 'father may have given them more ambition,' 'other people have lower expectations of my children' and 'I am affected by the extra demands and sacrifices I have to make.'

The related question pertaining to the importances of a male model was then put to them: would they prefer their children to have men or women teachers? To this the responses were usually reserved depending on the age and sex of the child.

However 42% of the mothers did prefer to have a male teacher for both their sons and daughters. Three mothers wanted female teachers for young children, then male teachers from about standard 4 onwards. Two mothers wanted women teachers for girls and men teachers for boys. Responses claiming the preference of one mother each were: 'depends on the teacher' 'no definite opinion' 'no preference' 'young teachers are best whatever their sex' There were four other combinations each receiving a single preference. They were:- 'a man for a boy, either sex for a girl' 'a man for a girl, no preference for a boy' 'a man for a boy, no preference for a girl', 'a woman for a boy, a man for a girl.'

It was clear then that the only preference receiving any kind of general support ~~was~~^{was} male teachers for both boys and girls. It should be noted that whilst some of the mothers had this preference because of the recognised need for a male model in their children's lives, others based their preference on the opinion that their children (of either sex) responded better to a male teacher. Further, in comparison with the sixteen who wanted all-male education for their children, not one mother wanted all-female tuition for her children.

No mothers felt that there were any particular problems associated with the children studying at home. Four said that their children brought home little or no homework in any case. One mentioned that television sometimes interfered with homework.

It appears then that home conditions were generally conducive to the children getting on with their education without interference. Further, most mothers (twenty-four) did not have difficulty in making contact with the teachers if they wanted to. Eleven mentioned problems in this respect. They included 'not enough time', 'too shy', 'once a year is all that is permitted', 'not much opportunity', 'P.T.A. meetings were boring,' 'waste of time,' 'primary schools were more accessible' and 'with the open plan the younger teachers are not so interested.'

When questioned on the relationship of the children with the teachers, a large majority were satisfied with the situation. Thirty-one (77.5%) said there were no particular problems. For five the issue had not yet arisen, and for the remaining four the problems were minor. The relationship of the children with other school pupils is considered in the section dealing with the effect on the children of the father's absence.

(ii) Community Relations.

Of the total sample of forty families, it was found that nineteen (47.5%) had been living in their present home for two years or less, and of these nineteen, thirteen had been living where they were for one year or less. A total of fifteen families had been living at their present address for six years or more, leaving six who had not moved for between two and six years. So whereas 30% had been separated for under two years, nearly half had moved house within the same period.

Some were women who were not eligible for state housing before the separation and who subsequently became eligible after separation. Of the twenty-six families in state houses, flat or units, eleven had moved there within the past two years.

When it came to determining how satisfied the mothers were with living in their particular neighbourhood they were exactly equally divided on the issue. Half were happy where they were and would not contemplate moving elsewhere, the other half were not happy and if given the opportunity, would move to another area. Naturally, all the women in the privately rented flats and the one in the privately rented house wanted to move because of the financial burden. Others wanted to move because they felt their neighbours were too 'nosey' (two) or tended to pick on them (one). All three of the women living with their parents wanted to move so that they could be independent.

Of the half who wanted to move there were eight living in state units and four in state houses whereas among the half who were satisfied where they were the number in state units fell to two and the number in state houses rose to thirteen.

So there was a definite preference for state houses rather than ~~for~~ state units. The dislike for the unit as a place to live was not necessarily based on any inconvenience of design but rather on the type of neighbourhood in which it was situated.

In exploring the possibility that these women might like to live in some sort of communal area set aside for solo parents,

sharing common problems (and perhaps interests) the answer was clear. Thirty-one (77.5%) rejected the idea, preferring to live, if possible, in a mixed community of both single and two-parent families. Only two said they would prefer to live in an exclusively **single-parent** family community. Two said their preference was for a rural environment, and five had no particular preference. On the matter of how they would classify their present environment, twenty-two (55%) said they would classify their area as being a mixture of single and two-parent families. Eight (20%) thought that their neighbourhood was one of predominantly solo mothers. Six (15%) thought they were the only solo parent families in the area. Of the remaining four, two said they did not know, one lived in the country and the other lived in an inner city flat without neighbours.

Relationships with neighbours were found to vary. The question relating to this point was phrased somewhat obliquely in order to avoid the type of answer one might feel compelled to give. So they were asked if they thought neighbours provide each other with mutual support. The replies were somewhat unexpected. Twenty two (55%) said **that** they deliberately avoided contact with the neighbours or felt compelled to avoid contact because of their neighbour's disposition. Some typical replies in this category were as follows:-
 'neighbours are nosey and gossip so I keep to myself', 'we're not ones to mix, like to keep to ourselves', 'I don't want to owe people any favours', 'the neighbours are nice to my face, then talk about me behind my back'. Others said that they or

the neighbours were too busy for much contact to develop.

Mothers who had reasonably friendly contact and who could feel that mutual aid would always be a possibility totalled 30% of the sample. Some of the mothers felt reassured that neighbours were simply there if needed even if there had been little cause to call on them in the past.

Of the remainder, two did not live near neighbours and five gave qualified responses which did not fit into the two categories mentioned. These included such statements as 'it took two years for me to be accepted but I know support is there now if it is needed', 'I only have contact if called upon, I'm careful not to intrude' and 'it depends on yourself, some neighbours are good but I don't go begging.'

Whilst 55% either did not seek or obtain friendship from their neighbours, a further 32.5% felt that they would like more opportunity to meet people and make new friends. In addition, a further 27.5% complained of feeling so shy and awkward in meeting new people that they preferred to remain as isolated as possible. A total of 60% therefore had problems of either feeling too shy to want to meet people or of feeling that sufficient opportunity to meet people did not exist. A common complaint was that there was no other place for a woman to make social contact except through hotel drinking. Most social or sporting clubs required a partner if they were for men and women, except the solo parents organisation. Paying for a baby-sitter was mentioned by two mothers as a barrier to evening outings. Several wondered what they would do if they did have the freedom for evening outings. They felt their choice would be very limited.

For the remaining 40% there seemed to have been a reasonable adjustment to their single status in that they felt they had sufficient contact with other adults or at least the prospect of sufficient contact.

The women were then asked if they ever felt that they would like to shut themselves away from people. It was intended that the responses to this question might give some indication of how they were coping with the demands made on them by life in general. A total of twenty two mothers (55%) said they never wanted to shut themselves away. Six of them took the opportunity to emphasise that they felt quite the opposite and would much prefer to have more company than they have now. The remaining 45% were equally divided between saying that they frequently wanted to isolate themselves. Reasons given by both groups varied. Depression was the main cause mentioned but four said they had felt a definite improvement since separation. One woman sought isolation 'to escape officialdom', another wanted to escape 'just to sleep' and another felt she was anti-people because they were usually either shallow or self-centred. In one case religious conversion was said to have caused a great improvement in ability to face up to other people.

And what of any stigma faced by divorced or separated mothers? Its manifestation was described in unusual ways. There were eighteen women (45%) who felt there was a continuing stigma in being a divorced or separated woman. Of this group, ten said that this was most noticeable in their relationship with married couples. They found that they

tended to be excluded from the activities of married couples, that their married friends seemed to drop away after the separation and that some of the wives became guarded and defensive lest their husbands 'strayed' in the company of an unattached woman. Others said they still felt the stigma but it did not bother them now as they had become used to it. One woman said she thought some solo parents had a bad reputation in her neighbourhood. Three said that they thought some business people tried to press an advantage knowing there was not a man to back them up. The way society ^{was} treats solo parents 'cited by one woman as a cause of the stigma

In contrast to the 45% who noticed a stigma, 40% said they thought there was no stigma at all. Answers ranged from 'not if people know your circumstances' to 'it requires adjustment on my part' and 'its more pity than stigma.'

The remaining six women give answers that did not clearly fall within either category. Examples included: 'people will gossip but only if given the opportunity,' 'I feel it a bit but it was much worse at first,' and 'I felt it at first but perhaps it was my imagination.'

For women who have some sense of isolation as a solo parent it appears that the barrier put up by married people is more keenly felt. All ten of the women who specifically mentioned this problem fell within the 32.5% who said that they would like more opportunity to meet people and make new friends.

(iii) Community Assistance.

An examination was made of the mothers' attitudes towards

the kinds of assistance the community extends to people in their situation. They were asked to rank, in order of helpfulness, the groups in the community with whom they have had contact.

The result of this ranking is set out in Table 2. The five groups listed in the table were all given a ranking regardless of whether or not help had come from that source. One woman felt she had had no help from anyone so her preferences could not be ascertained.

TABLE 2

Voting in Order of Preference.

| | 1st. | 2nd | 3rd | 4th | 5th | Total |
|--------------------------------------|-------------|------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-------|
| 1. Government Departments. | 2 | 14 | 8 | 8 | 7 | 39 |
| 2. Voluntary Agencies/ Charities. | 12. | 5 | 9 | 8 | 5 | 39 |
| 3. Church Organisations. | 7 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 14. | 39 |
| 4. Relatives. | 15 | 6. | 5 | 5 | 8 | 39 |
| 5. Friends. | 3. | 8 | 11 | 12 | 5 | 39 |
| Approximate order of preference. | 1st No.4 | 2nd No2 | 3rd. No.1 | 4th. No.5 | 5th. No.3 | |

It can be seen that the difference between the first three place getters was very narrow but 'Relatives' must take first place because of its clear lead as first choice.

One might have expected a higher rating for government departments considering that every women, was receiving a

social welfare benefit. One conclusion could be that they regard these benefits as theirs by right and that they were judging the issue on the kinds of assistance given over and above the benefits.

In considering 'helpfulness' the women may have automatically considered this in material terms. This might then account for the relatively poor performance of 'friends' from whom, no doubt, moral rather than material support is more likely to be forthcoming. This would be even more obvious in the case of 'Church Organisations.'

The fact that 'Relatives' took first place indicates the continuing importance of family ties in the giving and receiving of assistance. This was further illustrated by the response to the question - to whom would you most readily turn for assistance in time of trouble? (unspecified) 'Relatives' received the vote of exactly half the sample. The relative most frequently specified was 'mother' followed by 'parents', four said 'brother'. Among the other 50% were eight who would turn to friends first, three who would prefer not to turn to anyone. One said she would turn to the Social Welfare Department as first choice.

It was felt appropriate at this point to examine the kinds of assistance most likely to be sought. They were asked in what ways they thought their position as head of a single-parent family might be improved with outside help.

The means of assistance most commonly mentioned was financial (32.5%). This was followed by the 15% who specified help with home maintenance e.g. gardening, digging and

handyman repairs both inside and outside the house. Another 15% said they did not need outside assistance of any kind. For 17.5% their preference was for the kind of assistance that would enable them to be independent or self-sufficient. One wanted to use her independence to extend her social contacts. For the remaining 20% the help specified varied to include help in controlling an eldest daughter, clothing, accommodation, and the expressed need for a mate with whom she might share her life.

(iv) Kinship Relations.

(a) Outside the Nuclear Family.

An attempt was made to establish the extent to which relatives might be involved in lending support to their divorced or separated kin. The first fact to establish was the degree of contact these families might have with their relatives. Thirty mothers (75%) were found to have a continuing contact with blood relations of any kind. This is close to the 70% contact found by Webster (1972) in an interview study of a random sample of 133 intact marriages. The frequency of contact did of course vary as did the particular classification of relative with whom they had contact. Cases of relations deliberately avoiding contact since the mother's separation were rare—in only two cases. One mother had nine siblings in the Wellington area of whom she saw nothing. The main reasons for non-contact with relatives seemed to be either that they were all deceased or that the distance involved was prohibitive. This could reflect relative hardship; Webster found that distance did not affect contact with total kin, though it did somewhat reduce contact with first order kin.

For contact with the (ex) husband's family the situation was completely reversed. Thirty women had no further contact with in-laws. Seven said they had a little contact (mainly for the children's sake) and three said they had a close relationship with in-laws. One quarter of the women reported a definite change in their kin relationships after separation. In one case only was there an improved relationship as a result of this change. Again reference to Webster's findings indicates that the norm for intact marriages is equal contact with both husbands' and wives' kin. Broken marriage therefore means loss of kin.

Working on the possibility that one broken marriage might beget another broken marriage, the mothers were asked firstly if their parents had been or are still happily married and secondly if their (ex) husband's parents were likewise. For the women, ten (25%) said that their parents' marriage had not been successful. In the case of the (ex) husband's parents this figure rose slightly to twelve (30%). Given the fact that in 1969 there were 24,971 marriages in New Zealand compared with 4,108 petitions filed for dissolution or nullity of marriage (1971 New Zealand Year Book), the marriage failure rate for 1969 might be assessed at 16.4%. The figures of 25% and 30% in this group then suggests that there is some claim for saying that unhappy marriages beget further unhappy marriages in succeeding generations if the Chi-square test can demonstrate significance at the .05 level. In fact it can be shown to be significant at the .01 level (see Appendix E) (The figure of 4,108 would of course be inflated by those who have separated but have taken no legal proceedings for divorce.)

(b) Within the Nuclear Family.

Under this heading there was an attempt to build up an assessment of family interaction as seen through the eyes of the mother in order to ascertain the level of mutual co-operation and affection between mother and children.

Firstly, the mothers were asked about the level of communication that existed between them and their children. Of the total sample only three mothers mentioned any great difficulty in this respect. One mother said that her children only confided among themselves and that there was little confidence between parent and children. Another said she spent much of her time just screaming at the children. The third said there had been a complete breakdown in relations between herself and her eldest daughter who felt strong emotional ties with her father.

A further four did mention some unusual aspects of communication. In one family there was no physical contact between members, instead a rather large dog was happy to provide the focal point for family affection. Two mothers felt they were inclined to confide in their children too much in the absence of another adult.

In spite of these variations, it was clear that for 92.5% of the mothers there were very few problems with inter-family communication.

The next topic discussed centred around authority and control. Thirty women (75%) said that this area presented no major problems, although six of them qualified their ability to deal

with particular aspects. Three found that the eldest child was providing particular problems (their ages being 14,12,7) The other three said the situation would be better if there was a man to help out on questions of parental control.

Of the remaining ten women, eight felt that the situation was out of hand or rapidly becoming so. Three said they simply did not attempt to exercise any control. In each case the children involved were teenagers who had started drinking and keeping the hours of their choice. Another had relinquished the control of her three eldest sons to the care of State. A nineteen year old mother said she could not manage her seven month old daughter because 'she has her father's violent temper.' The mother of two boys aged four and three complained that they 'don't seem to respond to my bashings.' Two felt they were having problems but with perseverance they could be overcome.

A discussion centering around freedom and/or independence yielded further information in matters discussed under authority/control. The mothers were asked to discuss the extent to which they were strict or easy-going with their children. Only seven (17.5%) would classify themselves as being liberal and/or democratic in their dealings with their children. For twelve (30%) they did not think the question really arose (mainly because they thought the children were too young) and a further three simply said that they had never had problems in this respect. Fourteen mothers (35%) indicated that they always tried to exercise a fairly close degree of control although naturally this degree varied among them. The age

of the children was a significant variable. Four women reported finding control a problem. One complained that 'The Little Red School Book' had been an undermining influence. A Pakeha woman thought that Maori children were given too much freedom and that this had an unsettling effect on her half-caste children.

Judging by the responses given, one might fairly conclude that the proportion of women prepared to be 'liberal' with their children was comparatively small. Whether this was a product of the one-parent situation is difficult to say. The work conducted by the Ritchies (1970) suggests that it is not.

In looking at the interaction of siblings there was found to be the usual good-natured rivalry which frequently degenerated into 'scrapping'. This was regarded as completely normal by all concerned. Certain combinations of siblings were noted as producing more harmony than others. In only three cases was there trouble: two of the mothers said that the inter-sibling fighting was serious whilst the third said that her two daughters 'hated each other like poison and had absolutely nothing in common.'

In considering the future outlook for their children the prevailing tone was one of optimism. Twenty six (65%) said that they looked to the future with reasonable confidence for their children whilst recognising some of the shortcomings that now existed. One thought that the children would only succeed through her efforts, others were hopeful that the future

would bring some masculine influence. Only one saw the future as being better because of the father's departure. Rather the emphasis was on ways by which the present imbalance caused by the father's absence might be corrected.

For eleven (27.5%) the outlook for their children presented problems which varied considerably. In six cases the mother was concerned about particular children. Four were specifically worried about the boys in their family. Other sorts of concerns included anxiety about the children's employment prospects since many felt inadequate, and worried about the lack of a male element in the children's lives. One woman was anxious that she might let the children down if she became too depressed but she also said that this was better than having two unhappy parents. Another felt that the prospects were not bright for her children because of her poor health. The remaining three felt that they were unable to predict their children's future.

(v) Family Leisure.

As a group, the forty women were fairly evenly divided as to whether they felt that there were sufficient leisure activities for themselves, and their families. Over half of them (55%) said that on the whole the situation was fairly satisfactory. There were some misgivings of course, particularly in cases where the children, as teenagers, were becoming increasingly independent and going their own way in their spare time. Other mothers had actively encouraged this development because they wanted to be free to go their own way themselves. This group also included mothers with young

children who had no private transport yet who considered that their leisure activities were satisfactory. They had either adjusted to the situation by making the best of it, or felt that at least the situation was an improvement on what prevailed, before their (ex) husbands left. Two women said they never went anywhere and were content to stay at home. Included in this group (with one exception) were all the women who had fairly regular contact with male friends. There were eight in this category. Their leisure time was therefore fairly adequately filled with the companionship and outings provided by their escorts. The one exception was a young woman who felt trapped by having to live with her parents as she could not find any suitable alternative accommodation.

For the other 45% of the group the position was different. For them, leisure activities were simply not a part of their lives. Restraining factors mentioned were lack of finance, time, and transport. Some felt at a loss to know where to go or what to do to enjoy their leisure, for others there was no one to enjoy it with, particularly where the children were still under five.

The lack of finance and transport were no doubt interrelated. Seven women specifically mentioned the lack of private transport as being an obstacle to the enjoyment of leisure. Of the entire group, twenty eight (70%) had either no private transport or no access to private transport (e.g. through a son or daughter living at home and owning a car or a male companion making his car partially available). With the

majority of the group fairly immobile, one still did not find that that this was necessarily a bar to enjoying leisure. Eleven women had satisfactory leisure but no transport whereas fifteen said they had unsatisfactory leisure and no transport.

3. EMOTIONAL.

(i) Effect on Child of Father's Absence.

Under this heading the interviewer attempted to determine how the behaviour of the children in these families might have been affected either by the tensions leading up to parental separation, or the continued absence of the father following separation. It was not considered that either phase in the child's life could be considered quite separately as distinct causes of present behaviour except insofar as it was possible to note any improvement or deterioration since the father left. The effects on health are noted elsewhere.

It was found that 40% of the mothers considered that their children had benefited by the father's departure even though in some cases the situation was still far from normal. In such cases the mothers said the position was better than it would have been if the parents had not separated. For instance in one family the eldest daughter was still emotionally attached to her father and because of this she was providing the mother with a behavioural problem. Nevertheless the mother considered her daughter was still in a more advantageous position, emotionally, than if her parents had continued to live together.

A further 32.5% considered that, insofar as the children's behaviour was concerned, the separation or divorce had not

been a good thing. The remaining 27.5% felt that the departure of the father was not a relevant consideration in assessing their children's behaviour. The main reasons given in this category were that the children were too young at the time of separation to have developed any actual ties with their father or that it had been too recent or too long ago.

In 57.5% of the families the mothers considered that one or more of the children had been emotionally disturbed by events preceding the separation. In ~~nine~~ families it was the eldest child only and in two families each, the eldest two children and the youngest two. In the remaining ten families of this category all children were said to have been adversely affected but in five of them a spontaneous improvement since the father's departure was noted. In the families where the eldest or youngest only was said to be affected only one mother mentioned any improvement in that particular child since separation.

The effects noted by the mothers varied. The most common one was nervous tension as a result of cruelty inflicted by the father on the mother or the children themselves. In two families the anxiety was said to cause asthma, in another enuresis. Anxiety was also said to have undermined one child's sense of security, and in another family resulted in the two **eldest** children being "broody" and bottling things up. One mother felt that her own emotional upset was transmitted to her child who in turn reacted **adversely**.

In considering the question of delinquency among the

children it was found that it occurred in three families (7.5%) to a serious extent. It occurred in a further five families to a minor extent. Those classified as 'serious' were the instances where the children involved had appeared in Court for their offences. In two of the three cases, the children had been committed to institutions for their offences, in the third case the offender was placed on probation. In one family all three of the boys had been committed to the care of ^{the} state whilst the three sisters (all younger) did not appear to have been affected in any way. Of the five families having minor problems, four of them contained adolescent sons who were asserting their independence, drinking and keeping their own hours. In three of these four families the youths had committed minor traffic offences. In the fifth family the eldest boy, aged ten, had been refusing to attend his local school and so had moved to live with his grandparents to attend another school. His mother said he had now settled there satisfactorily. He was reported to have a strong emotional attachment to his father although he had not seen him for about five years.

In looking at how the children in the sample mixed at school it was found that 52.5% of the families had no problems in this respect whilst the question was not applicable for a further 12.4% of families. The remaining 35% reported that at least one of their children was not able to mix satisfactorily with the other pupils. The most common problem was the child being too reserved or shy to make friends readily. When asked the more general question as to how their children mixed socially the response was

somewhat different, as 60% said that there were no particular problems and 12.5% said the question was not applicable.

Among the remainder, the responses varied. Two mothers admitted to trying to keep their children to themselves and another two said that their children's contemporaries were too rough. The children from the remaining families was described as not being good mixers because they were either 'backward' 'shy' or 'standoffish.'

It was found that there were few problems in the view of 80% of the mothers as to their children's associates. With 20% there were variations noted such as daughters and sons under twelve preferring the company of the opposite sex or younger children preferring the company of older children. One Pakeha boy of nine would only mix with girls or Maori boys. Two mothers thought their children's friends unsuitable because they were 'rough' One mother mentioned an adult unmarried son who preferred the company of 'loose married women.'

A question exploring the possibility of either girls or boys being more affected by the father's absence brought forward nothing conclusive. For 45% the question was not applicable while 17.5% found that the sexes were not affected differently. A further 17.5% thought the boy was more affected, whilst 12.5% thought the girl was more affected. With 5% it was not seen as a boy/girl problem but more as a question of birth order. Probably the birth order explanation was the most accurate; on looking at the twelve families which said

either boys or girls were affected most, it was found that in eleven of the families the sex named as most affected was that of the eldest child.

The next discussion attempted to establish the children's attitude towards their fathers (as seen by the mothers). It was found that in 20% of families the mother described the children as being favourably disposed towards their father. Comments in this category ranged from 'they tend to idolise him' to 'they have a small amount of affection for him but it's mainly pity.' In another 20% of the families the eldest child only knew and liked his or her father whilst the other siblings were indifferent. In three families it was the eldest only who disliked the father whilst the other siblings in two of the families did not know him. In the third family it was the youngest sibling only who was close to his father but in this case that father was step-father to the older siblings. In 27.5% of the families all the children were disinterested in their father. In 10% of the families all children were said to be hostile towards their father whilst in another 15% they either did not mention him, did not know him or had no contact with him.

The mothers were then asked to give their views on the effects (if any) that arose from the children having contact with their father. The father was not available for contact for 37.5% of the families, and for another 22.5% no contact with the father was sought or made. This left 40% of the families for whom there had been some contact since separation. In 27.5% of the families the children were still seeing their father from time to time. Of the 40% of the families who had some

contact in the past with the father, the mothers in half of them judged that contact had not been beneficial for the children. It was most commonly described as being 'disruptive' 'unsettling' or 'upsetting'. In four families the contact was judged to be beneficial but in only two were the mothers keen for this to continue. In the remaining four families the contact was considered to be of neutral value.

In looking at the question of where they thought the children's loyalties lay, 70% of the mothers thought their children's loyalty would be to their mother rather than to their father, whilst 22.5% said the loyalty would be divided between both parents. The remaining 7.5% were doubtful as to what their children's feelings were on the matter.

Finally, the mothers were asked to assess their children's views on the matter of their mother possibly providing them with a step-father at some time in the future. The largest group consisted of those who thought their children would be opposed to a step-father coming into the home (30%). Reasons given for this attitude included 'the children are aware of the pitfalls of step-fathers, they have seen other failures,' 'the children wouldn't want to share me', 'the children are never keen on my men friends', 'they are still involved with their father' and 'the boys are resentful about my plans to re-marry.' A total of six women (15%) were planning remarriage but in all but the one example given above, where the boys were in their late teens, the children were aged ten years or less and had no objection to the idea of a step-father. It was found of the twelve families in which

the children objected to having a step-father, in ten of the families there were mainly teenage children. This suggested that teenagers would be less willing than younger children to adjust to the changes that a step-father might bring. In addition they might have felt less need for a step-father at a time in their lives when parental influences were consciously being rejected. This was further illustrated by the fact that of the six families (15%) in which the children hoped for a step-father four had children no older than eight. In the eleventh family there were teenagers who were always joking about their mother remarrying (in a good-natured way) and in the twelfth family the fourteen and twelve year olds were said to be in favour 'but only for their mother's sake'. In a further three families the children's aspirations for a step-father were mixed. In six families (15%) the consideration was not relevant as the children were too young, and in another six families the matter of a step-father was never mentioned. Finally two mothers said their children would have no objection if they did remarry, one of them saying that her daughters shared her own view that any intending step-father would have to be of a high standard.

This meant that of the children who were old enough to have formed some opinion on the matter and who in fact had expressed some opinion, about half were reported to favour the advent of a step-father whilst the other half did not.

(ii) The mother's adjustment to solo-parenthood.

In this section an attempt was made to assess the extent

to which the mothers were personally affected by the father's absence. In addition, their overall situation was evaluated by the interviewer in order to determine how successfully, or otherwise they had adapted to the new situation. Finally, their attitudes to the future, including the possibility of remarriage, were examined.

The mothers were asked what they thought of their present role as a mother and how they felt this role had changed, if at all, from the time of separation. Exactly half of them felt that their overall situation was better as a mother since they had separated from their husbands. However a quarter of those who felt this way also pointed out that there were additional responsibilities (and worries) attached to being a solo mother. They found that the dual-parent role that they now had to fill was often a difficult and demanding one. Some of the comments these women made included: 'life is more orderly and secure but there is more difficulty being both mother and father to the boys as they get older,' 'I feel an improved ability to cope but I'm worried about a deadened emotional response to my children.' For the women who felt an unreserved improvement comments included: 'I now have more time to think about the best way to act for the children: there is a better understanding,' 'I'm now unhampered by my husband's unreasonable ideas,' 'I have come to terms with myself much more, I feel more maturity and self-understanding as time goes by,' 'I do things now because I want to, I feel there is more purpose in life for me' and 'I have been able to relax more with things more stable and predictable. I can take life as it comes without looking too far ahead'.

Whilst half the mothers saw an improvement in their lives

since separation, six said that their life had in fact become harder in the time that they had been on their own. None said that life was easier. Some who found things harder did so on the basis of acknowledged deficiencies in themselves: 'I don't have as much patience as I used to, things are inclined to get on top of me', 'I find it a strain to insist on obedience, I more naturally give in to the children'; 'I worry a lot and need someone to talk things over with.'

There were some mothers who felt that whilst their lives were not better or worse (35%) they did acknowledge certain changes in their role as a mother. For instance 27.5% of all women felt that there was more responsibility now than before separation. But 30% said they thought their roles were unchanged mainly because they had carried most of the responsibility before they became solo-parents.

In looking at their attitude towards their (ex) husband only four (10%) admitted to any lingering affection for him. They described it in this way - 'We are still good friends but we couldn't live together again', 'I wouldn't go to him if he came here I would take him for the sake of the children', 'If we hadn't had any children we would still be together,' 'I have warm feelings for him but not love.'

For the remaining thirty-six women feelings ranged from indifference to intense hatred. Looking at the question of remarriage, three said that they had definite plans for remarrying and a further three thought remarriage was a reasonable possibility. A further twenty-four (60%) said that they would remarry if a suitable male was available.

Their reasons for wanting to remarry varied but the majority emphasised that companionship was their prime motive. One exception was a woman who said she would only remarry for the children's sake. At present she was quite content to remain single and enjoy male companionship without responsibility.

For the 25% who said they would not consider remarrying there was a high degree of 'admitted' loneliness. Others did not think remarriage to be a realistic alternative as they had adjusted to a single life quite adequately. One woman who had been separated for seventeen years had become very active in community welfare work. For her the thought of remarrying was unattractive as she felt it would inhibit her freedom to do what she was now doing. Several others made the point that activity was the best defence against loneliness. One woman felt she had become too independent to contemplate remarriage whilst another said she would not have the confidence to remarry in case she had more children. The demand for an unrealistically high standard from any future husband was given by one woman as a reason why she would probably never remarry. She spoke of a 'soul loneliness' and the need to share her deep spiritual life with someone. Only one woman gave as a reason for not remarrying the fact^{that} she had seen the effects of too many broken homes for her to want to try again.

In making a completely subjective assessment of each mother to determine how well she had adjusted to solo parenthood it was necessary to take into account her past as well as her present and to examine the aspects of her social

functioning already discussed. It was decided to place each woman into one of three categories of adjustment (a) - good, (b) -neutral, (c) - not good. The result was (a) - 52.5% (b) -17.5%, (c) -30%.

The neutral category included those women who had not made any adjustment either because their duration of separation was too short or because their situation was so unchanged since their (ex) husband's departure that adjustment of any kind was not needed. Their overall situation was either previously depressed and continued to be depressed, or was relatively good and continued to be relatively good. The 30% in the 'not good' category were those who found that their situation had deteriorated since separation. For a third of them this meant a deterioration both physically and emotionally, for two thirds, it was just emotional, most commonly taking the form of depression and loneliness. For the majority whose adjustment was found to be good there were many whose marriage had been so unhappy that just the simple release from it automatically brought with it an improvement. This improvement was then subsequently built upon by the women taking positive steps themselves (usually with the help of outsiders) to make their lives better.

4. THE "CANTRIL" QUESTIONS.

The group was asked nine questions that have been used by Cantril (1965) in examining components of satisfaction. They were chosen because they provided an opportunity to compare the groups' responses with those of Cantril's American sample

as well as giving the opportunity to study sub-groups among the women themselves. By doing this it was hoped to more accurately identify some differences in attitudes between this group and a larger population.

The nine questions are set out in Appendix D together with the preliminary comments. They are numbered one to nine below for convenience but occur in Appendix D numbered 60 - 68. The respondents were asked to identify their rating for each question on a scale 0-10 (Ten to indicate strong agreement down to nought indicating complete disagreement.) The mean scores are set out on Table 3 with some additional calculations shown to indicate the effect of certain variables on the average scores.

TABLE 3.

Mean Scores on Cantril's Components of Satisfaction.

| | A. | B. | C. | D. | E. | F. | G. | H. | I. | J. | K. | L. |
|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 1. | 8.5 | 6.0 | 6.8 | 7.4 | 4.0 | 3.8 | 7.9 | 4.9 | 4.0 | 6.8 | 6.5 | 6.7 |
| 2. | 8.1 | 6.8 | 7.1 | 7.0 | 6.5 | 7.2 | 6.9 | 7.3 | 6.5 | 6.5 | 6.7 | 7.3 |
| 3. | 7.6 | 6.9 | 7.8 | 8.0 | 6.6 | 7.6 | 6.0 | 7.3 | 5.2 | 6.8 | 5.6 | 8.2 |
| 4. | 7.4 | 6.0 | 5.7 | 5.7 | 7.0 | 7.3 | 5.2 | 5.5 | 4.3 | 5.1 | 4.7 | 6.5 |
| 5. | 7.3 | 5.3 | 5.6 | 6.7 | 4.6 | 4.6 | 5.5 | 6.3 | 5.7 | 4.3 | 5.4 | 6.0 |
| 6. | 7.0 | 5.1 | 5.9 | 6.5 | 3.6 | 4.8 | 5.1 | 5.2 | 5.2 | 4.6 | 4.4 | 7.0 |
| 7. | 6.7 | 4.9 | 5.4 | 5.2 | 4.1 | 5.6 | 4.1 | 4.7 | 4.0 | 4.9 | 4.4 | 6.0 |
| 8. | 4.3 | 5.0 | 4.2 | 4.7 | 5.7 | 5.3 | 5.2 | 4.8 | 5.4 | 5.2 | 5.7 | 4.8 |
| 9. | 4.1 | 4.9 | 4.5 | 4.1 | 5.7 | 4.9 | 5.3 | 5.2 | 5.5 | 5.3 | 6.1 | 3.8 |

- Key= A - Cantril's Mean Rating
 B - ~~Group's~~ Mean Rating.
 C.- Divorced (13)
 D.- Separated for over six years (14)
 E.- Separated for two years or less (12)
 F.- Aged under thirty (15)
 G.- Aged over forty (13)
 H.- With three or more years of secondary education (13)
 I.- Paying rent for private flats or house (6)
 J.- Children still having contact with father (11)
 K.- Some degree of child delinquency reported (8)
 L.- Employed (12)

Note: The figure in brackets indicates the number of women in each category.

Some Interpretations.

In comparing the group rating with Cantril's mean rating, one finds that the group scores are lower than the Cantril standard on the first seven questions (all positive) and higher on the last two questions (all negative). With the greatest variation occurring in the response to question one (2.5), one might conclude that the experiences associated with separation and divorce are not conducive to the recognition of the importance of religion. It is apparent, when looking at the specified categories, that the response to this question among members of this group, is more likely to be affected by age than any other factor (7.9 for those aged over forty as against 3.8 for those aged under thirty). But even the highest scoring sub-group was still .6 behind Cantril's mean suggesting a degree of religious disenchantment arising from separation or divorce. The responses to questions three (-0.7) and eight (+ 0.7) came the closest

to the mean rating suggesting that the group members did not feel particularly helpless in making their own lives more satisfying. The group response to question three is worth comparing with the response to question six. This shows that the group would like to be independent but its members do not feel that they have sufficient opportunity to do what they would like to do.

When considering certain sub-groups, chosen because they could possibly illustrate their relevance as variables in the lives of these women, one finds some scores varying more noticeably than others. These will be examined separately for the purpose of offering some explanation for the deviation.

The women who had been separated for more than six years (column D) were older than average. Therefore, in view of what was said above about attitudes to the importance of religion, (No 1), it was not surprising to find them scoring 1.4 above the group mean. In all questions, except number 4, they showed a greater degree of 'satisfaction' than the group as a whole indicating that this could be a function of greater maturity in general. But they scored 0.3 below the whole group on 'confidence' in oneself'. This margin is not particularly significant but the indication is that older unattached women whilst being more mature than the younger unattached ones, do not necessarily face the future with more confidence. This is more evident in column G (women over forty) where the score for number 4 dropped to 0.8 below the group's mean rating.

The reverse appears to be true for those separated for two

years or less. They scored lower on the first seven 'positive' questions except for the 'confidence' question being 1.0 above the group and only 0.4 below Cantril's mean rating. So they have more confidence than the older women but as questions eight and nine reveal they are also more worried and afraid of the future and feel that life holds more troubles or obstacles for them. This is shown to be more a function of recent separation than just youthfulness or maturity. The mean rating in questions eight and nine for women under thirty dropped 0.4 and 0.8 respectively from that in column E while the women over forty dropped 0.5 and 0.4 respectively. Some further evidence of this was found by comparing responses to eight and nine in columns D and G - women separated for over six years had less worries and faced less trouble than the women-over-forty group.

It appeared that the most important single difference for women separated for two years or less was the fact that they felt much more restricted than any of the other women and lacked the opportunity to do what they would like to do (see question 6). This suggested that the burdens and responsibilities of solo parenthood are more keenly felt during the first two years than any other time. Their responses to questions seven, eight, and nine (column E) reinforce this point of view.

A comparison of column F and G demonstrates the age variable. Question one produced a greater variation between these two sub-groups than among any other sub-groups. (3.3) Clearly, then, the recognition of the importance of religion was (among other things) a function of increasing age. As was to

be anticipated from the previous discussion on 'confidence' the younger women were 1.3 above the total group and 2.1 above the older women. They fell behind the older women on the 'enjoyment' question but rated themselves to be more successful. Perhaps the women over forty had had more time to consider their misfortune whilst the 'under thirties' were hopeful that the future would rectify any misfortunes they now had. Of all the sub-groups examined, the women under thirty gave themselves the highest 'success' rating whilst the women over forty were only 0.1 above the lowest success rating among the sub-groups.

Column H did not produce any significant variations. The women scored lower than average with the importance of religion but had the highest score among the sub-groups on the respect they had for themselves as a person. One could tentatively argue here for a link between education and self-respect.

Considering that the women paying rent for private flats or a house were the most economically depressed group, it was not surprising to find their scores also 'depressed'. Their greatest deviation from the group mean was in response to the question on religion (-2.0) They scored the lowest of any sub-group with questions three, four and seven (independence, confidence and success). This suggests the importance of economic security on the morale of women in this particular position. Further, these women had been separated on an average of twenty-two months, so they would share some of the problems noted in column B.

The group in which children were still having contact with their father did not produce any notable variations from the group mean except that it contained the lowest score for question five (enjoyment of yesterday). This could mean that generally speaking this contact is a source of irritation to the mothers.

The mothers reporting some degree of delinquency among their children were a comparatively 'depressed' group. This showed particularly in relation to questions three, four and nine. The results were fairly strong feelings of helplessness and despair and a comparative lack of confidence in themselves. Their score of 6.1 for question nine surpassed the other sub-groups by 0.6 indicating a strong element of worry as to the future. The children's misbehaviour was therefore clearly reflected in their mother's responses to these questions.

This group was in total contrast to the twelve women who were currently employed. They scored well above average on the first seven questions and had the lowest 'anxiety' rating in response to question nine. They showed that they had a greater sense of being independent than any other members of the sub-group (question three) and in fact surpassed Cantril's mean rating. They were also top-scorers on question six showing that they felt a strong sense of personal freedom. This sense of independence and freedom was in turn reflected in their lack of fear about the future.

DISCUSSION, INTERPRETATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.(1) Discussion.

This study, based as it is on a sample of only forty women, has not attempted to establish facts about divorced and separated families but rather has been concerned to ~~discover~~ the more typical and important issues facing families of this kind. The research design has been constructed to allow for maximum flexibility so that an awareness of the uniqueness of each family was always clearly in view. It is the author's conviction that, in research of this kind, the individual situation should warrant as much study as the search for common trends and interrelationships among the group. But whilst the study may have been flexible there was the necessity to avoid discussion of individuals in order to preserve complete confidentiality and also to be totally dependent on the responses of the women in the one interview for the sole source of information about each family. There were no follow-up interviews and no contact with the children or the father. So the study amounted to an investigation of the attitudes and opinions of the women themselves (in addition to the information elicited by the fact-type questions). This necessitated dealing with the topic at a level that could be completely understood by all the women in the survey. Further these attitudes, on the day, could have been coloured by extraneous factors such as ^{the} particular mood of the women, their expectations of the study, or their reaction to the interviewer.

(ii) Interpretation.(1) Causes of Marital Failure:

The reasons for marital failure were found to be varied and

complex, Excessive alcoholic drinking emerged as the dominant cause of broken marriages, with seven out of every ten being affected in this way to varying degrees. Coupled with this excessive drinking were two other major causes, those of physical violence and financial irresponsibility. In all cases where the husbands drank excessively they also failed to provide adequately for their families and in all but one case, the violence and cruelty perpetrated on these women and/or their children was the result of excessive drinking. The fourth significant cause-adultery by the husband - was not closely linked with the other three but was symptomatic of the general breakdown in the marital relationship.

(2) Finance.

It is clear that the provision for approximately a 20% increase in state assistance provided in the June 1972 budget alleviated the financial plight of divorced and separated women receiving social welfare benefits. That such a large single increase should have been necessary illustrates the extent to which benefits had become depressed before the budget. However the grinding poverty of the kind described by Marsden (1969) in England was not apparent in New Zealand. Most women found they had to be especially thrifty to live within their means and a large minority found the provision of adequate clothing a continuing problem. Whilst most of the group were unable to save anything and were dependent on hire-purchase to replace more expensive household items, nevertheless most of the women also said that there had been a distinct financial improvement since their (ex) husband's departure. It seems then that the

loss of a usually unreliable breadwinner was more than compensated for by the security of an assured income and the independence to administer it.

Women renting state houses or units were more financially secure than those in privately rented houses or flats because they spent 19% less of their income on rent. It was not surprising, then, that more of the women in the latter category wished to continue living where they were.

A feature of the (ex) husbands' occupational classifications was the preponderance of those in unskilled or semi-skilled occupations. Further research would be necessary to establish that the more highly skilled or unskilled a man is in his employment, the more likely he is to provide adequately for his (ex) wife so that the state is not called upon to assist with monetary benefits. There is evidence here to suggest that this could be the case. Many women also gave evidence to suggest that maintenance orders need to be more rigorously enforced against defaulting males.

(3) Employment.

Of twelve women employed at the time of the interview, the greater majority thought they were fairly paid and they were also working by choice rather than necessity. Their above-average morale, sense of purpose and independence was reflected in their "Cantril" scores. This contrasted sharply with some of the basic problems faced by the group as a whole: boredom, loneliness and a sense of being tied down to one's domestic responsibilities.

(4) Health

Whereas the health of 50% of the mothers in Marsden's study continued to be affected by the events associated with the divorce or separation, the proportion was 33% in this study. More importantly, though, 60% felt that their health had improved since the husband had left as against the 12.5% who felt that their health had deteriorated. The corresponding proportions for the children's health was 35% (improved) and 17.5% (health problems persisting). It was the mothers' view, then, that their health was more affected by the preceding events than their children's. But it emerged that the eldest child stood a higher chance of being affected than his siblings. This could be partially accounted for by the fact that in some cases only the eldest child remembered or had much contact with his father. Further it seems possible that the mother is more likely to transmit her anxiety to the eldest child than to any other.

As there was no evidence either in this study or in the literature of boys' health being affected more than girls' (although they were affected differently) it seems that birth-order is a more important independent variable than sex for children in these families. This became evident not only in respect to health but also in respect to general emotional development as well.

It appeared that the health of the sample had improved, and in some cases was continuing to improve, as a result of the (ex) husband's departure. There were the exceptions but it seems

reasonable to conclude that the tensions of an unsatisfactory marital relationship are more conducive to health troubles than the condition of single parenthood, both for the mother and the children.

(5) Education.

The majority of mothers (60%) either did not think that the father's absence had a deleterious effect on their children's education, or had been positively beneficial. This finding is generally supported in the literature although this study has no clear evidence of the effect of family break-up during the first three years of schooling (reported in the literature as being deleterious).

The husbandless mothers' high aspirations for their children's educational achievement (reported in the literature where poverty is not a factor) was also recorded in this study. On the other hand the group was notable for its own generally low level of education (matched by the generally low level of their (ex) husbands' occupational classification.)

Over half of the mothers stated that they were satisfied with the schools' performance and in a reply to a separate question, over three quarters were satisfied with the relationship of the children with the teachers. The only teacher preference getting clear support from the mothers was the 42% who wanted male teachers only for both their sons and daughters. This could reflect an anxiety among some of the mothers for their children to be exposed to an acceptable male influence.

(6) Community Relations.

The women were equally divided as to whether or not they

were satisfied with living in their present neighbourhood and the preference for state houses over state units was notable. But the idea of a communal area set aside for single parents was strongly rejected - only two mothers expressed a preference for it. Considering the fact that 35% of the mothers' marriages had broken up within the previous two years, it was not so surprising to find that just under half had moved house within the previous two years, whilst one in three had moved house within the past twelve months. Possibly this accounted for the generally low level of neighbour-contact; only 30% having reasonably friendly contact and 55% avoiding neighbours altogether. But there would be other reasons for this: a total of 60% of the women admitted to being shy or having insufficient opportunity to meet people and make new friends. In addition to this, 45% desired either frequent or occasional isolation and 45% also felt a continuing stigma on their marital status which was manifested in a variety of ways. In the final analysis, about half the mothers tended towards an introverted social attitude whilst the other half felt the desire to expand their social contact.

The fact that the mothers regarded their relatives as the prime source of assistance together with the fact that 75% maintained contact with them indicates the continuing strength of the wider family as a source of comfort for those of its members who need it. This supports Webster's (1972) finding that in the supposed event of family crises, even those who normally maintained low contact came up ^{to} the same level of availability as others. Equally, the evidence showed that

contact with in-laws ceased for three quarters of the women after the (ex) husband left home. Relations within the nuclear family itself seemed to be reasonably satisfactory. About a quarter of the mothers were having unusual problems with their children and a similar proportion predicted that these problems would continue.

The kind of assistance mentioned by the mothers as being the most important showed no clear preference apart from the third who stipulated financial help. Noteworthy were the two groups not mentioning a specific assistance of any kind: the 15% who felt no need for assistance and the 17.5% who wanted help to achieve independence and self-sufficiency.

Family leisure showed the group to be almost equally divided. It was a disturbing feature of this study to find that for 45% of the group, leisure activity outside the home was almost non-existent. The most inhibiting factor was lack of transport but it was evident that a solo mother with young children could also be inhibited by lack of finance, or time. In addition, the type of housing and its locality and the extent of one's personal interests and contacts tended to influence the situation. It seems reasonable to conclude, then, that there is a complex variety of factors contributing to a solo mother's unhappiness about leisure activities.

(7) Some Effects on the Child of the Father's Absence.

Marsden's evidence that half the mothers found the effects of fatherlessness to be harmful to their children approximated the situation in this study. In the case of the mothers for whom this was a relevant consideration there were only

three more in the group who considered that their children had benefited from their father's departure than in the group who considered that it had not been a good thing. The evidence in the literature, whilst recognising the kinds of damage caused by the absence of the father per se, also demonstrated that the effects of pre-separation tension are more damaging for children than the results of the marriage breakdown ex post facto. This was indicated in the study by the fact that 57.5% of the mothers considered that one or more of their children had been emotionally disturbed by the pre-separation tension. This suggests, then, that if tension between the parents is such as to render the marriage unworkable, then the children would be more adversely affected by the tension continuing than by the permanent departure from the home of one of the parents. It should not be taken from this, though, that it is invariably better for parents to break-up if they think they are incompatible. If there could be even the remotest chance of reconciliation then parents should strive to achieve it. The evidence indicates that the children will be better in all respects for having the benefit of two compatible parents rather than one.

The literature on delinquency in fatherless homes further supports the above conclusion. The evidence is that delinquency is more likely to be a problem in homes where poverty is the dominant characteristic or where the children have no emotional support from the parents (as is likely in unhappy unbroken homes). As these sorts of situations did not prevail in the present study it was not surprising to find that delinquency

overall did not constitute a major problem although in the three families affected it had caused considerable difficulty for all members of those families. In the cases where delinquency did occur the fathers had either left home when the children were very young or had been incurable alcoholics.

What was more noticeable was the fact that 35% of the mothers reported that at least one of their children was having trouble making social contact at school mainly because they lacked basic confidence in themselves. This suggests that for the children of at least a third of the families the effect of being 'different' was apparent. This can only be an assumption as no evidence is available as to what the proportion would be of children from 'normal' homes. That eight out of ten of the women were satisfied with their children's associates suggests that this problem may not be a continuing one.

As was the case in looking at the children's health, there was no evidence either in this study or in the literature to suggest that the general effect of fatherlessness was worse for either boys or girls. Again the chronological age variable was found to be more likely to determine the degree of disturbance than the sex of the child, the eldest child invariably being affected most.

The evidence in this study suggested that as a group, teenagers were less willing to accept a step-father than younger children. This is not unexpected, as it was also found that of those children who did maintain a favourable image of their father it was usually the eldest one. The

close similarity between the proportion of families in which the children continued to see their father from time to time and those in which the children were also thought to have divided loyalties to both parents (about one in four in both cases) was, on closer examination, found to be only coincidental. The same children did not tend to fall into both categories.

(8) The Mothers' Adjustment to Single Parenthood.

Whereas 15% of the mothers found that their life was now harder since they had been on their own, half of the women felt that their overall position as a mother had improved since separation. This corresponded closely to the 52.5% who were found to have made a good adjustment in the subjective analysis. Overall, then, it could be said that one woman in every two interviewed was either well adjusted or her situation was improving. Of the other half, 60% (or 30% of the total) continued to be adversely affected by the marriage breakdown and did not see any improvement in sight. It was this group that was most in need of some kind of appropriate outside assistance.

The group as a whole, however, seemed to be more optimistic about the future than the women in Marsden's study. For instance, whereas half of the English women did not consider remarriage desirable, only a quarter of the New Zealand women felt this way. Part of the answer to this however could lie in the fact that in this study only 10% confessed to any lingering affection for their (ex) husband whereas half of Marsden's sample felt this way (one third of his group preferring some kind of de facto marriage the second

time around). The New Zealand women had made a much cleaner break with the past and this seemed to enable them to expect more from the future. The reasons for wanting to remarry naturally varied. Many felt the need for companionship more intensely because of their present loneliness. It was surprising to find only one woman who said 'never again' to marriage solely on the ground of her previous experience in marriage. One might have anticipated a stronger reaction to the very unpleasant experiences many of them had suffered.

(9) The Mothers' Attitudes as Reflected in their Centril Scores.

The 'Centril' questions proved useful as a means of comparing sub-groups of the sample. Some interesting trends emerged and one found certain characteristics associated with both older and younger women which one might expect to find regardless of separation or divorce. For example the older women placed a higher value on religion but tended to rate themselves lower on confidence and success. Youth seemed to have more hope for the future yet the older women tended to enjoy life more.

The burden of single parenthood seemed to fall most heavily on the shoulders of the group who had been separated for two years or less and it is perhaps towards these women that, initially, the most outside help should be directed. That the women living in private flats and those whose children had been delinquent at some time, should emerge as depressed groups was not surprising. But a feature of this section of the study was the emergence of the working women as the sub-group with the highest morale. This suggested that independence

and activity gave an inward pride and satisfaction that was worth more than any outside help could ever be.

(iii) Recommendations:

(a) Specific Recommendations:

1. That more stringent measures be adopted to ensure that arrears of maintenance are more rigorously followed-up and that, if necessary, more power be used to make attachment orders on wages a workable alternative.
2. That the Government re-examine the maximum allowable income as it applies to divorced or separated women with dependent children.
3. That divorced and separated mothers be given priority for state housing but that if possible, their congregation into particular areas be avoided.
4. That social and sporting clubs/organisations specifically encourage the admission of solo parents to their membership as a means of providing social contact for them with people who are not also solo parents.
5. That service organisations make more time available to co-ordinate community assistance for general maintenance work both inside and outside the homes of divorced and separated women.
6. That the churches give serious consideration to the reasons for the generally low rating accorded them by divorced and separated women as potential sources of assistance.

(b) General Recommendations:

7. That community resources be mobilised to provide additional

financial and counselling assistance to mothers during the first two year of separation.

8. That schools pay particular attention to the social integration of children from homes affected by separation or divorce and that male teachers for these children be regarded as being able to play an important role in the children's social and emotional development.
9. That divorced and separated women be generally encouraged to be as independent as possible so that the assistance given is realistic and not damaging to the dignity of the recipient.
10. That working mothers be encouraged in every way possible to maintain their self-sufficiency and that where feasible vocational retraining be available if requested by single parents.
11. That appropriate administrative machinery be set up for permanent dialogue to be established between single parent organisations and relevant state and community organisations so that the needs of solo parents can be continuously reappraised and appropriate action taken.
12. That it become as difficult to ~~contract~~ into marriage as it is to contract out of it. The first step towards this could be the introduction of compulsory pre-marital training programmes designed to heighten awareness of the social ,**legal** and moral obligations of marriage.

VIIISOME IDEAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH.

1. The mean ratings of life satisfaction borrowed from Cantril were helpful but it would have been preferable to measure the scores of the divorced and separated women against a New Zealand standard. It would appear then that New Zealand standard scores should be obtained. These would certainly benefit further research on minority groups within this country.
2. It should be feasible, using the contacts already established, to extend the research of this study to include widows and unmarried mothers. These two quite distinct categories of solo parents could provide a means of comparison with the divorced and separated group thereby yielding a broader view of single-parent families.
3. It might also be possible to interview divorced or separated fathers supporting children on their own. No doubt the practical difficulties of locating an adequate and co-operative sample would be much greater than in the case of the mothers. Nevertheless the view of single-parent families would be further broadened by such an exercise.
4. Other studies might also be initiated to include interviews with the children of such families as well. Research into their attitudes and opinions of family relations both before and after the parents' separation would be of particular value.
5. There is scope for a study concentrating on the actual school performance of children from homes affected by divorce or separation. There would be no difficulty in establishing control groups and data for comparison could

be readily available. It might be more difficult, however, to compare the school performances of children from broken homes with those from the so-called 'intact but unhappy homes'. The latter group would be extremely difficult to identify.

6. Further to Recommendation 12, there seems to be an urgent need for a more wide-ranging, in-depth study of the causes of marriage failure. The information derived thereby would be worthwhile for all people working in the field of family relations. In addition the knowledge gained would provide valuable background information for the proposed compulsory pre-marital training programmes.

APPENDIX A.

19th May, 1971

Dear

A Study of the Single-Parent Family in New Zealand

I am proposing to study some social, emotional and economic aspects of the single-parent nuclear family in New Zealand for an M.A. thesis in Education at Massey University. Hopefully, the thesis will throw some light where the issues are at present either confused, not recognised or have never been thoroughly investigated. The single-parent family may stand to gain from the study particularly if, after some specific research, I am in a position to make recommendations for remedial action to appropriate quarters.

The single-parent family does not appear to have been studied very intensively in this country. The related literature does not cover the aspects I want to investigate. To counteract this, I am approaching you as a practitioner dealing with the day to day problems faced by this particular group. Your comments will be valuable insofar as they will indicate where the main areas of study could be concentrated and what assumptions need to be developed or rejected.

With this in mind I am enclosing some questions which I hope you will answer. Your responses will provide the springboard for this investigation and help to orient it in a direction that will facilitate the study.

Yours Sincerely,

O.M.WILSON.

QUESTIONS.

It is appreciated that some of these questions may not be easily answered in a few lines. Please use additional space if necessary. I enclose extra paper for this purpose.

1. Do you consider that the single-parent family in New Zealand faces disadvantages when compared with the two-parent family?

You may wish to respond under the following headings:

(i) Widowed family:

(ii) Divorced family:

(iii) Separated parent family:

(iv) Any combination of these categories:

2. If so, do you consider that the disadvantages are sufficiently widespread so as to require special attention?
3. Would you please list these disadvantages in order of seriousness.
4. Would you please list the effects of these disadvantages in order of seriousness.
5. Would you please indicate what action you would consider appropriate to remedy the problems you have identified.
6. Would you please identify any particular contributory causes relevant to these problems.
7. Do you think that any of these causes have peculiarly New Zealand characteristics or arise from conditions peculiar to New Zealand? If so, which ones and why?
8. Would you please add any further comments that you think are relevant for a study of the single-parent family.



In correspondence with
Department please
quote reference
number shown below

SOCIAL SECURITY DEPARTMENT
PRIVATE BAG
WELLINGTON 1

February 1972

Dear Madam,

Over recent years there has been a growing awareness of the lack of knowledge about the social and financial circumstances facing various groups of people in the New Zealand population.

In keeping with this, the Social Security Department has accepted a request from a research student, Mr Ormond Wilson, of the Education Department of Massey University to assist him with an exploratory study. The study will consist of an interview survey of some families in Palmerston North where the mother, like yourself, is a social security beneficiary and probably having to bring up her children by herself. From Mr Wilson's study, it is hoped to gain more understanding of the overall position of single-parent families and I commend taking part in this survey to you.

If you are willing to be visited in the survey, would you please write your name and address on the sheet provided and return it in the enclosed stamped envelope to Mr Ormond Wilson, 93 Ruamahanga Crescent, Palmerston North, as soon as possible. This will indicate to Mr Wilson your willingness to be visited but it will not commit you to taking part because you may wish to know more about the study before making up your mind. If you wish to telephone him, his home number is 83-811.

If you do not wish to take part in the survey you do not need to advise either Mr Wilson or the Department. No one outside the Department is aware that you have been invited to participate.

I would stress that taking part in this survey is quite voluntary and that if you do participate, any information you give will be kept strictly confidential to Mr Wilson only. He has not been given your name or any other information about you or your family. If a report is published as a result of this study no individual person will be identifiable in any way.

Your participation in this survey is invited..

Yours faithfully,

(C.A. Oram)

for Chairman

Social Security Commission

APPENDIX CTHE STUDY OF SINGLE-PARENT FAMILIES.

I wish to indicate that I am willing to be visited in connection with the abovenamed study.

NAME:

ADDRESS:

TELEPHONE NUMBER: (if applicable)

LENGTH OF TIME AS A SINGLE-PARENT MOTHER:

NUMBER OF CHILDREN:

THEIR SEX :

THEIR AGE :

MARITAL STATUS AND TYPE OF BENEFIT RECEIVED:

- (a) WIDOWED
- (b) DIVORCED
- (c) SEPARATED
- (d) RECEIVING A DOMESTIC PURPOSES BENEFIT
- (e) RECEIVING A DESERTED WIFE'S BENEFIT

(PLEASE TICK WHAT APPLIES TO YOU).

Signed.....

Date.....

APPENDIX DInterview Schedule

Note: The questions here are to be regarded as a guide only as to the way the interview was conducted.

Section 1. General.(a) Family

- (1) Duration of solo parent-hood
- (2) Number of boys/girls in the family.
- (3) Children's ages. Mothers' age

(b) Marital.

- (4) Duration of marriage.
- (5) Husband contact: (a) for mother
(b) for children
- (6) Causes of marriage breakdown.

(c) Income.

- (7) Extent of financial income.
- (8) How this is obtained: (a) Social Welfare.
(b) Maintenance.
(c) Employment.
- (9) If employed (a) are wages fair.
(b) do you work of necessity or by choice.
(c) does work (i) affect your health
(ii) affect your capacity to
care for the children.
- (10) Occupation of (former) husband.

(d) Expenditure.

- (11) Extent to which you forego necessities of living.
- (12) Extent to which financial situation has altered since
husband's departure.
- (13) Extent to which you are able to save.

(14) Extent of unusual expenditure.

(15) Nature of house tenancy.

(16) Rent payable.

(e) Health

(17) Present state of health (a) yourself

(b) the children

(c) any changes in family
health patterns since
father's departure.

(18) Availability and quality of medical services.

(19) Any noted health differences between boys and girls.

SECTION TT-SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS.

(a) Education.

(20) Extent of formal education (for mother and father)

(21) Extent of desired formal education for children.

(22) Extent (if any) of effect on children's education
as a result of father's absence.

(23) Extent to which you feel you and the schools are working
together in the training of the children.

(24) Assessment of the children's attitude to education.

(25) Mother's preference for men or women teachers for
children.

(26) Opportunities for study at home.

(27) Opportunities for mother to discuss progress with teacher(s)

(28) Assessment of children's relationship with teachers.

(b) Community Relations.

(29) Length of time in this neighbourhood.

(30) Satisfaction in living in the neighbourhood. Would
you contemplate moving if the opportunity arose.

- (31) What sort of neighbourhood would you prefer e.g. only among solo parents, a mixture, only among two-parent families.
- (32) How would you categorize this neighbourhood.
- (33) Do neighbours help each other much.
- (34) Would you like more opportunity to meet people and make new friends.
- (35) Do you ever feel you want to isolate yourself from people.
- (36) Do you think there is any stigma in being a solo-parent.
- (37) What group or groups within the community have you found to be the most helpful since you became a solo parent. Rank in order of preference:
- (a) Government departments
 - (b) Voluntary agencies/charities.
 - (c) Religious organisations.
 - (d) Relatives.
 - (e) Friends.
- (38) Who would you most readily turn to in time of trouble.
- (39) Ways by which you think your position as head of a single-parent family might be improved with outside help.
- (c) Kinship Relations.
- (40) Extent of contact with (a) your relatives.
(b) your in-laws.
 - (41) Was/is your parents' marriage comparatively successful.
 - (42) Was/is your husband's parents' marriage comparatively successful.
 - (43) Quality of your communication with the children.

- (44) Mother's attitude on aspects of authority/control
(for children)
- (45) Mother's attitude on aspects of freedom/independence
(for children)
- (46) Extent to which mother and children can share leisure
activities.
- (47) Aspects of sibling interaction.
- (48) Future outlook for the children.

Section 111 - Emotional Relationships.

(a) Effect on child of Father's absence.

- (49) The effects of pre-separation tension on (a) boys.
(b) girls.
- (50) Any general noticeable effects on the children's
behaviour (both at home and in the community)
- (51) Quality of relationships of children with other
children (e.g. the ease or otherwise with which they
mix with other children, or the type of friend they
prefer to have)
- (52) Mother's view of children's attitude towards their father.
- (53) Effects on child (if any) of father contact.
- (54) Mother's view of to which parent children feel
the strongest loyalty.
- (55) Mother's view of children's hopes about having a
step-father.

(b) The Mother's Adjustment to Solo-Parenthood.

- (56) The changes (if any) to her present role as a mother
since becoming a single parent (including her attitudes
and responsibilities.)

- (57) The mother's present attitude towards the father.
- (58) Her views on the proposition that there are faults on both sides when a marriage breaks up.
- (59) Mother's views on what the future holds for her, including her assessment of the possibility of future marriage.

SECTION IV - THE CAMBRIL QUESTIONS. *

- (60) How important would you say religion is in your life. If religion is extremely important, use the top of the ladder; if it is not at all important, use the bottom.
- (61) Now, how about the respect you have for yourself as a person -- that is, your feelings of being a worthwhile and worthy person, as contrasted to feeling that you are a failure and don't amount to much. Think of worthwhileness as the top, sense of failure as the bottom.
- (62) To what extent do you feel there is a good deal you can do yourself to make your life happier and more satisfying than it is, as contrasted to the feeling that there isn't very much you can do about it yourself. Let the top of the ladder stand for being able to do a good deal for yourself, the bottom stand for a feeling of rather complete helplessness.
- (63) How about your confidence in yourself in general-- that is, how sure you feel of yourself. Think of the top of the ladder as complete confidence in yourself, the bottom as not being at all sure of yourself.

- (64) Would you say that, by and large, you enjoyed yourself yesterday? Let's see, yesterday was:
- Think of the top as having enjoyed yourself a lot, the bottom as not at all.
- (65) Now how ~~about~~ the extent to which you feel you have an opportunity to do what you would like to do as contrasted to the feeling that you are doing only what you have "got" to do. Think of the top of the ladder as being completely free to do what you want to do the bottom as doing only what you have to do.
- (66) How would you rate yourself as to how successful or unsuccessful you have been in terms of achieving your own goals and aims in life? Think of the top of the ladder as being completely successful, the bottom as being entirely unsuccessful.
- (67) To what extent do you feel your life is full of troubles or obstacles? This time think of the top of the ladder as indicating a person whose life is mainly a whole series of problems and obstacles he is facing and the bottom as a person without troubles or obstacles.
- (68) To what extent are you worried or afraid that things might get worse for you and your family; that is, to what extent are you anxious that such things as your financial situation, your security, your health, your social position, your opportunities, etc., might become worse than they are now? This time think of the top of the ladder as indicating you are extremely worried: the bottom indicating you are not at all worried.

* From Robinson J.P. and Shaver P.R.

APPENDIX E.

If "unsuccessful" marriage can be interpreted consistently with petitions filed for dissolution or nullity of marriage then the following calculations may be made:

| Parents' marriage success. | Parents' marriage failure. | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|---|
| 58 | 22 | observed in a sample of 80 (data on husbands and wives (merged) |
| 66.8 | 13.2 | expected on basis of 1969 figures. |

(Expected Failure: 16.4 % of 80 = 13.2)

(Expected Success: 83.6% of 80 = 66.8)

A value of X^2 can be derived from these data by the following method.

| Parents Marriage | fo | fe | fo-fe | (fo-fe) ² | $\frac{(fo-fe)^2}{fe}$ |
|------------------|----|------|-------|----------------------|------------------------|
| Success | 58 | 66.8 | - 8.8 | 77.44 | 1.16. |
| Failure | 22 | 13.2 | 8.8 | 77.44 | 5.86. |

Chi-Square statistic is $X^2 = \sum \frac{(fo-fe)^2}{fe} = 7.02.$

(where fo = observed frequency in a given cell)

(fe = expected frequency in that same cell by)

(virtue of some theoretical prediction.)

The theoretical distribution for X^2 for one degree of freedom is such that there is less than one chance in a hundred that such a calculated value of X^2 could be greater than 6.64 by chance alone with df = 1, $X^2 \geq 6.64$ has an associated

probability $\leq .01$; hence rejection of the null hypothesis is warranted at the .01 level.

(Null Hypothesis: Among unsuccessful marriages, the incidence of failure of the parents' marriage is no different than one would expect from the general population failure rate.)

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